

HAZARDS OF BIOENGINEERED FOOD
November 11-24, 1996

IN THESE TIMES

STARBUCKED!

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EDITORIAL

WHY AMERICANS SHOULD HATE THE PRESS

A recent *Frontline* program called "Why America Hates the Press" missed its nominal target by a mile, and in the process did a great disservice to the public. It also illustrated the limits imposed by PBS, even on this often-insightful program. This was not really a look at the press, or at the popular reaction to it. Instead, *Frontline* took easy shots at entertainment programs like *The McLaughlin Group*, *This Week with David Brinkley*, *Crossfire* and *The Capitol Gang*—all of which resemble circus acts more than they do journalism. True, journalists do appear on these shows, but only in their role as trained seals going through a routine intended to amuse while they pursue their right-wing agendas. Not surprisingly, therefore, *Frontline* skewered its targets as unworthy of real journalism—an all-too-obvious observation, but not convincing evidence that America hates such shows, only that it should.

Left unexamined was the more important question of whether journalism's public mission has been sacrificed to the bottom line and corporations' stake in maintaining the status quo. It is the kind of question that cannot be asked, much less answered honestly—even on what is supposed to be the public's own network. The corporate interests that control PBS simply wouldn't tolerate programs that broach this taboo subject.

Two weeks ago, Joel Bleifuss gave us a partial explanation for why so many Americans are fed up with mainstream media. In his "First Stone" column, he examined the treatment that one of the nation's newspapers of record, the *Washington Post*, has given to the *San Jose Mercury News* story about CIA responsibility for the crack epidemic. Bleifuss detailed how for years the *Post* ignored the background of this story and how, once the *Mercury News* piece came out, it featured the CIA's denials while telling as little as possible about the new charges.

Bleifuss might just as easily have written about the general response of the corporate media to the story. The pattern is simple: Ignore or belittle charges of CIA involvement in the drug trade, even those made in congressional hearings. Then, when the CIA or other federal agencies respond, feature the denials while telling as little as possi-

ble about the original findings.

This pattern has a long history. As we've noted many times, CIA involvement in drug trafficking dates back to the beginning of the Cold War, and has been well documented. In virtually every case, however, the corporate press has ignored the facts until they were reported and documented by independent publications or authors. Then the denials have been emphasized. And, of course, the pattern of CIA criminality has never been examined in its historical context. Each case is written about as if it existed in a vacuum. At most, it is treated as an aberration for which some rogue agent or agents are responsible. Charges against high-level officials are never "substan-

tiated." And since the history of such activity and the relation of each new episode to the agency's pattern are ignored, the responsibility for what has become an unacknowledged policy at the highest levels of government need not be examined.

Then, to add insult to injury, our most responsible newspapers accuse the CIA's victims of paranoia. Thus the *Post* explained African-Americans' reaction to the CIA-crack story as the result of these people's "inclination ... to accept

While the corporate media protect their own, they show little concern for the victims of imperious power.

as fact unsubstantiated reports or rumors about conspiracies targeting blacks." And while rushing to conclude that the CIA-crack story has "little evidence to back it," the *New York Times* marvelled that blacks could be gullible enough to believe it. Jesse Jackson told the paper that what makes the *Mercury News* story "so believable ... is that there is abounding circumstantial evidence." This evidence, added to the weight of experience with

"government operating in adverse or conspiratorial ways against black people, ... is what's driving the story," he said. The *Times*, of course, dismissed Jackson's comments by concluding that his views have "little to do with the quality of the evidence" presented by the *Mercury News*.

Compare this exquisite concern for high quality evidence in this instance with the treatment accorded Richard Jewell in Atlanta. In that case, the press throughout the nation showed little concern about the evidence before finding the security guard guilty of planting a bomb at the Olympics. But then Richard Jewell is not a major instrument of state power. He is just an ordinary working person. ◀

IN THESE TIMES

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InTHESETIMES

CONTENTS

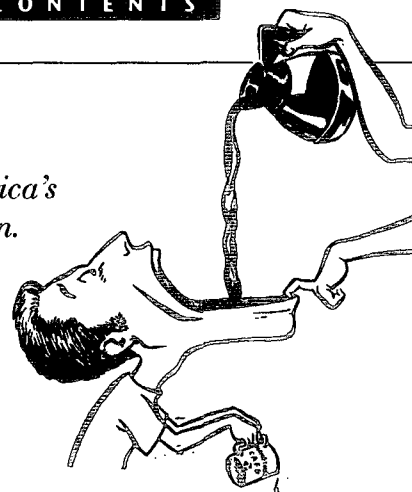
Volume 20, Number 26

Starbucked!

The predatory tactics of America's largest gourmet coffee chain.

NICOLE NOLAN

14



Recipe for disaster

Chemical giants are promoting bioengineered food that may wreak havoc with the environment.

JOEL BLEIFUSS

12

Money talks

In the relentless race for cash that marked the 1996 elections, both parties flouted campaign finance laws.

ANTHONY CORRADO

18

FEATURES

- An intransigent drug policy • Eva Bertram and Kenneth Sharpe..... 22
 One year after the Million Man March • Salim Muwakkil..... 26
 Criminalization of poverty in El Salvador • Mario Murillo..... 28
 In the end: Deconstructing Disney • Matt Roth..... 40

REVIEWS

- Film: *Looking for Richard* • Linda DeLibero..... 30
 In Print: *Possessed by the Past* • Chris Lehmann..... 32
Newt Gingrich • Ken Silverstein..... 35

DEPARTMENTS

- Letters 4
 Media Beat • Patricia Aufderheide 9
 Sylvia • Nicole Hollander 4
 Tomorrow's news • Steve Brodner 9
 In Short 6
 Huge Mouth • Peter Hannan 11
 Appall-O-Meter • David Futrelle 7
 Classifieds 37

LETTERS

Impotent jibes

Michael Moore clearly has talent. He turned a seemingly bottomless reservoir of anger and a flair for publicity into some very funny productions. It just turned out, as my predecessors at *Mother Jones* discovered, that those rare qualities were not that much fun up close. One staff member counted 14 different reasons Moore had given publicly for being fired from *Mother Jones*, each tailored to its audience. Most of them trumpeted the theme of the working-class guy oppressed by the liberal elitists at a magazine named after a labor heroine. How ironic! How media-savvy of Moore to exploit the irony.

Now, in an *ITT* interview with Moore a decade later ("Michael and Me," October 14), Chris Lehmann appends his own complaints about his year as a *Mother Jones* fact-checker to Moore's better-publicized claims. The

result is so lame that even Moore can't get it up, forcing Lehmann to write a whiny introduction half as long as the interview itself. Lehmann's gripe is that his fellow workers didn't take his "critical appraisals" of Laurie Anderson and David Byrne seriously enough—clearly marking Lehmann as a true son of the working class and his opponents as "culturally condescending." That and the fact he didn't smoke pot.

Of course, it turns out that the main pop star Moore attacked during his brief tenure at the magazine was Bruce Springsteen—for not being working-class enough. (Is there an echo in here?) Springsteen's sin was being too successful and making too much money, an authenticity problem Moore presumably avoids now by giving some of *his* money away. As we know, no real working-class person wants to stay either rich or famous.

The real question is why *In These Times* would want to take another

slap at *Mother Jones*, based on a 10-year-old beef. Perhaps to lay claim to superior working-class credentials. If, however, you've just decided to open your pages to old complaints about left-wing employers, I can send a few writers your way.

Kerry Tremain

Creative Director and Acting Editor of
Mother Jones, and founding
Art Director of *In These Times*
San Francisco

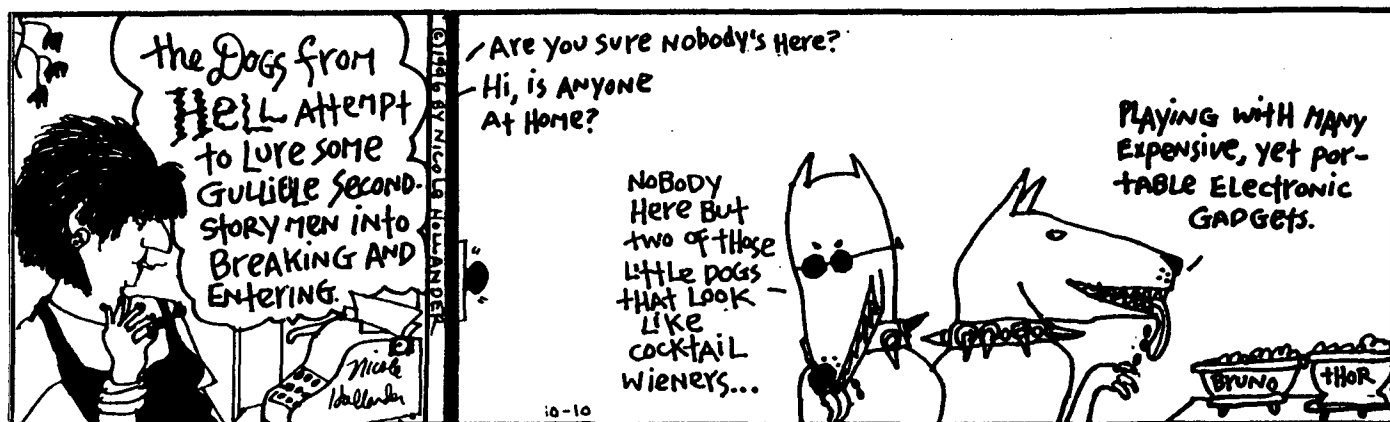
Chris Lehmann replies: Let me see if I have this straight: I'm a lame and whiny working-class poseur; Michael Moore is a rich hypocrite and a working-class poseur, who, to my dismay "can't get it up" (!) to flog his prole credentials. Bad faith, it seems, envelops me and most everyone I encounter like a body-stocking.

Let me suggest an alternative explanation: Might we consider Mother Jones a bit, well, touchy about the Michael Moore affair and the issues raised by it? How else could Moore, who routinely would blast "Born in the U.S.A." out of his office when he edited Mother Jones, be retroactively baptized a Boss-basher? (For the record, Tremain is trying to summon up the memory of a skeptical, though respectful, column by Ben Hamper on Springsteen, which did run in Mother Jones during Moore's tenure there.)

Of course, Tremain wasn't at Mother Jones during Moore's tenure. He's simply been given the disagreeable task of respinning an embarrass-

SYLVIA

by Nicole Hollander



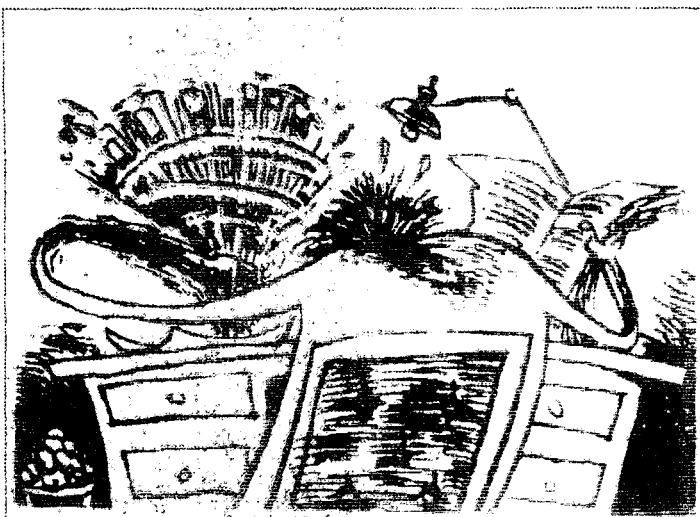
ing chapter from the magazine's past, and despite his overheated invective, I don't begrudge him his chore.

But permit me to respond to his closing rhetorical flourish with one of my own: Why does Mother Jones return over and over again to this episode with such bombast and righteous indignation? Why would I be berated for trumpeting a working-class "authenticity" I neither claimed nor have in a brief reminiscence entirely devoted to cultural disputes? But wait, I've forgotten—Michael Moore is the indefatigable spinner of the tale of his own firing. And I'm the whiny guy.

Sterile quarrels

Both Lawrence Keeley's book, *War Before Civilization: The Myth of the Peaceful Savage*, and Jean Bethke Elshaint's review of it ("Savage realities," September 30) reproduce the sterile quarrel between Hobbesians and "Golden Agers" that they condemn and that has stultified serious investigation of human violence. Non-state peoples are very diverse. Stereotyping them as savages is as fatuous as stereotyping them as peaceniks. War and peace involve complex adaptations to social and political realities, not some reified platonic "human nature."

A careful reading of Keeley's book reveals that his evidence for "Golden Ager" obscurantism comes from unfavorable reviews of his grant proposals by two archaeologists and two historians who disagreed with his interpretation of the copious information on non-state societies. Some evidence Keeley uses comes from our work; we've both devoted our lives to studying war and peace. But since Keeley selects only the most warlike societies for discussion and ignores more peaceable ones, he obliterates the vari-



ation without which understanding cannot rise above simplistic generalizations about a mythic "human nature." This apparently willful exclusion makes it impossible for him to address the question of why more than a third of non-state societies were not continuously at war.

We can learn useful things from non-Western peoples, but not by oversimplification and stereotyping. Our problems differ in many ways from those of non-industrial peoples. For example, American traditions and media extol coldness and cruelty in a way the Gebusi of New Guinea (whom both reviewer and book cite as particularly ignoble "savages") would find horrifying; and, unlike us, Gebusi look after their children rather than consigning them to beggary.

R.K. Dentan and Keith Otterbein
Anthropology and
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Amherst, N.Y.

Roots of war

I was disappointed to read Jean Bethke Elshaint's uncritical review of Lawrence Keeley's *War Before Civilization*, which suggests that war and violence are universal human traits.

There is much evidence that some early human cultures—though obviously not all—were total strangers to the art of war. In particular, according to some historians, the "primitive"

gathering/hunting cultures that preceded the development of settled agriculture were generally free of organized violence both internally and in their contacts with other peoples.

The native peoples of what is now the mid-Atlantic region of the United States, for example, seem to have had no use for warfare until some of them stopped moving and built agriculture-based settlements.

The archaeological record indicates that some of these first settled communities provoked raids, and that many were subsequently fortified as raiding became a frequent threat. Similar examples of primitive pacifism and the decline into warfare are well documented for other regions and periods, and some scholars therefore see the roots of war in the beginning of agriculture and conflicts over land and food stores.

Rather than suggesting that violence and warfare are universal features of human history—which they clearly are not—Keeley and your reviewer might better try to understand what kind of cultural and economic conditions seem to lend themselves to the practice of peace.

Larry Lack
Philomath, Ore.

Correction

In our October 14 editorial, we inadvertently gave the figure of \$365 billion for the amount of military spending authorized in the 1997 budget bill. The correct figure is \$265 billion.

Editor's note: Please try to keep letters under 250 words in length. Otherwise we may have to make drastic cuts, which may change what you wished to say. Also, if possible, please type and double-space letters—or at least write clearly and with wide margins.

INSHORT

eyes. Others had extra eyes and grotesquely unnatural folds of skin. One frog, Cyclops-like, had one eye near the middle of its forehead and another eye growing on the inner lining of its throat.

For decades, frogs have been touted by ecologists as a perfect indicator species, a kind of easily monitored biological barometer of the health of the

environment. One reason is that in each stage of their development—from egg to tadpole to frog—these species are exposed to environmental contaminants. Another reason is that frogs breathe through their skin. These factors combine to make frogs especially sensitive to chemicals, heavy metals and habitat changes.

Though the precise cause of the deformities is unknown, pesticides are at the top of the list of suspects. The wetlands of Minnesota and Wisconsin have become a kind of chemical sink, the ultimate depository for thousands of pounds of pesticides sprayed on the farms, orchards and pine plantations of the Great Lakes region. Even lakes in the wilderness country of northern Minnesota and the

Upper Peninsula of Michigan are vulnerable to contamination through pesticide drift. The federal Office of Technology Assessment reckons that more than 40 percent of the pesticide dumped by planes drifts from the target area, ending up in streams, schoolyards and neighborhoods. Fluorescent tracers have shown that it takes only a moderate breeze to carry poisons such as 2,4-D and paraquat 20 to 50 miles. One study found poisons such as toxaphene, furan and dioxin in the mud on the bottom of Lake Siskiwit, a small body of water on Isle Royale, a



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CURSE OF THE MUTANT FROGS

For the past several years, ecologists have raised alarms about a startling decline in the frog population. According to one recent estimate, global amphibian numbers have plummeted by as much as 50 percent in the last 30 years, and hundreds of species have vanished entirely. Earlier this summer, herpetologists at the University of Minnesota released the results of a two-year study on amphibians in the Great Lakes region confirming the

population decline. After combing through the reeds and muck of dozens of ponds and lakes in Minnesota, the scientists made a bizarre and darkly troubling discovery: A large percentage of the frogs captured in their survey were hideously deformed.

Some frogs were missing legs, while other frogs were found with five or six legs, often growing out of strange locations such as the spinal cord, neck and belly. Many frogs were missing

APPALL-O-METER

THE IN THESE TIMES INDEX OF INDECENCIES



By David Futrelle

Like a virgin 6.1

Marlon Berry—no, not the one you think—seems to have been caught covering up an unsavory incident in his past, the *New York Times* reports. Berry, a Democratic candidate for Congress in Arkansas, had been running ads suggesting he was a true political outsider—and that he'd never before held elective office. Turns out that he has: He was a Gillett, Ark., city council member for four years in the late '70s. A campaign adviser explained that the "cover-up" was really just an error—the ad was supposed to say that Berry had never held "major elected office." So Berry did take a puff of elective politics; he just didn't inhale.

Steal American 4.6

Patriotism hasn't gone out of style. A recent report on the most frequently stolen cars in Chicago suggests that Midwestern thieves are

altogether all-American. American cars—Oldsmobiles, Chevys and Buicks—topped the auto thieves' wish list last year, the *Chicago Sun-Times* reports. According to a spokesman for the National Insurance Crime Bureau,



which compiled the list, the popularity of these models has "a lot to do with consumer preferences. In the Midwest, people like to buy American products. So thieves like to steal American products."

Realty bites 5.4

And the mortgage bankers shall inherit the earth: Ellen Craswell, a Republican gubernatorial candidate in Washington state and a self-professed "Christian radical," sees no problem with imposing

her fundamentalist, anti-"sodomite" views on the rest of the population. "My saying that the righteous should go into government is no different than the realtors celebrating one of their own going into politics," Craswell told the *New York Times*.

Buck stoppage 4.8

After it was revealed that employees of Chicago city government had racked up some \$1.5 million in unpaid parking tickets—and that police accounted for \$500,000 of the total—an embarrassed Mayor Daley announced a belated crackdown on city scofflaws. Among the city officials trudging in to pay their fines: Alderman Burton Natarus, the City Council's Traffic Committee chairman, who blamed a good portion of his \$1,030 fine on his daughter. "I'm not making an excuse," he told the *Chicago Tribune*. "I'm paying the damn things now. But my daughter takes the car often, what am I gonna do? But I'm paying anyway. What's the big deal? I'm paying, I'm paying."

Appallo-O-Meter scale

1. Friends-less
2. Macarenish
3. Un Kemp-ed
4. Dole-orous
5. Below the Beltway
6. Ralph Reed-icious
7. PRI-posterous
8. Netan-yahooish
9. Taliban Terrible
10. Unabombastic

pared to the rest of the state."

The warning of the deformed frogs of Minnesota seems to have been lost on both the Congress and the Clinton administration. In August, President Clinton signed a bill supported by agribusiness and the chemical industry abolishing the Delaney Clause, which for the past 40 years has prohibited known carcinogens from processed foods. Among other things, the new law will allow nearly 80 new pesticides linked to severe health problems to be placed on the market.

—Jeffrey St. Clair

THE FEDEX AMENDMENT

In the closing days of the 104th Congress, Sen. Ernest Hollings (D-SC) helped the Federal Express Corp. win passage of a bill that will make it easier for the company to oppose employee efforts to join a union. At issue were two words—"express carrier"—that Federal Express aggressively lobbied to have restored to the Railway Labor Act. Cleverly avoiding a conference committee hearing, Hollings dutifully tacked the "FedEx amendment" onto an important Federal Aviation Administration appropriations bill that was set for a final vote. After an unsuccessful two-day filibuster led by Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA), the bill, including the FedEx amendment, cleared the Senate and was signed by President Clinton on October 9.

Federal Express, whose annual sales total more than \$10 billion, is hoping that these magic words will ensure that its more than 65,000 truck drivers and other non-airline employees come under the jurisdiction of the Railway Labor Act (RLA), which regulates the labor practices of the airline and railway industries, rather than the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA). Under the RLA, unions are only allowed to organize nationally—that is, all of a company's offices and facilities must

wilderness island in the middle of Lake Superior. Winds had carried the pesticides there from more than 200 miles away.

Most chlorine-based pesticides, such as 2,4-D, are known to be endocrine disrupters that wreak havoc on the body's growth-inducing hormones. This effect, of course, is not limited to amphibians. In fact, several recent studies in Minnesota have shown a direct link between exposure

to pesticides and human birth defects. "Two pictures emerged from these studies," says Peter Montague, director of the Annapolis, Md.-based Environmental Research Foundation. "First, the birth-defect rate for children born to pesticide applicators was much higher than that in the general population. And, second, the birth-defect rate in that part of Minnesota with the most concentrated use of pesticides was significantly higher com-

be organized together. Under the NLRA, unions can organize locally, on a shop-by-shop basis. As Christy Hoffman, assistant legal counsel for the Teamsters in Washington, points out, it is extremely difficult for a union to organize nationally.

"The express carrier provision is a blatant and sinister attempt by a large corporation to manipulate labor law," argues Edward Wytkind, executive director of the Transportation Trades Department at the AFL-CIO. "Federal Express is attempting to use the Railway Labor Act to shield itself from efforts by its employees to form a union."

Federal Express, a notoriously anti-union employer, dismisses these charges. But with both the Teamsters and the United Auto Workers currently trying to organize Federal Express truck drivers and personnel in Indiana and Pennsylvania, the FedEx amendment will strengthen the company's position immeasurably. Meanwhile, FedEx's main competitor, United Parcel Service, is covered by the NLRA and has been successfully organized by the Teamsters, a fate Federal Express is hoping to avoid.

As one of Washington's most powerful corporate clients (Federal Express has contributed \$600,000 in PAC money so far this election cycle), the company's victory was not surprising. But the narrowness of the amendment—it basically affects one company—and the length to which



Way out there

NASA'S RECENT ANNOUNCEMENT that life had been discovered on Mars was just the U.S. government's underhanded way of preparing people for a close encounter, according to Michael Luckman, director of the New York-based Center for UFO Research. "This is part of a time-release program to gauge the public's reaction before announcing contact with higher life forms," Luckman told the *Washington Report*. "Independence Day may just be a movie, but it's interesting that both Bob Dole and Bill Clinton saw it and made sure to make a public mention of it."

—Joel Bleifuss

members of the Senate went to ensure its passage have caused some observers to marvel. As the *New York Times* reported on October 12, Federal Express "was able to engineer a remarkable legislative victory, prevailing upon the Senate to remain in session two extra days solely to defeat a filibuster by its opponents."

Of course it helps to have 17 Democrats, including Sens. Tom Daschle (D-SD) and Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), vote against labor and join the Republicans. To their credit, Sens. Russell Feingold (D-WI), Tom Harkin (D-IA), Patty Murray (D-WA) and

Paul Simon (D-IL) opposed the bill for two days, joining Kennedy during the attempted filibuster.

Despite all the Republican carping about the AFL-CIO and "Big Labor" spending \$35 million to elect a Democratic Congress, there is no question that Big Business still rules the roost in both parties. Considering the bipartisan support for measures like the FedEx amendment, it's not clear that a Democratic majority would make much of a difference when it comes to protecting or strengthening collective bargaining rights in the United States.

—Ron Bigler

Turn right at the library

THE CHRISTIAN RIGHT IS SETTING OUT TO CAPTURE PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARDS IN THE SAME WAY IT HAS GONE AFTER school boards. The September 18 edition of *Focus on the Family Citizen*, the weekly publication of the family-values advocacy group Focus on the Family, heralds the creation of Family Friendly Libraries (FFL). In a story titled "What lurks in the library," Scott DeNicola reports that FFL wants to get local libraries to sever their ties to the American Library Association (ALA), and by extension to junk the ALA's Library Bill of Rights. Dennis Pierce, as chair of the Loudoun County (Va.) Library Board of Trustees, led an effort to ban Loudoun County Library from complying with the ALA requirement that libraries make available "the widest diversity of views and expressions, including those that are unorthodox or unpopular with the majority." The board also did away with the the Library Bill of Rights' "anti-censorship" provision. "As a group we're opposed to censorship," Pierce says. "But what we didn't buy into was the radical political agenda of ALA." Pierce explains that the ALA is more insidious than the ACLU, People for the American Way and Planned Parenthood. "ALA is a little more dangerous because it's accomplished what it has very quietly," says Pierce. "ALA has been doing this over a long period of time in libraries across the United States." —J.B.



What competition?

The 1996 Telecommunications Act was supposed to offer a simple trade-off: The industry would be deregulated, and consumers would reap the benefits of competitive pricing and service. Well, the industry got what it asked for, but most customers have yet to be offered any alternatives for local telephone service, and the prospects that they will be anytime soon are fading fast. Local phone companies, which must now rent potential competitors access to their networks, have just won a court judgment that blocks Federal Communications Commission rules governing rental arrangements.

Phone companies will find it easier to protect their monopolies as long as states, rather than the feds, take the lead role in writing new rules. Most state governments have done nothing to encourage competition — not surprising, given phone companies' well-cultivated ties to state regulators.

Meanwhile, other telecommunications conglomerates are backing away from previous plans to compete in new media. As David Lieberman noted in *USA Today*, Time Warner, which had long suggested it wanted to get into phone service, is now pooh-poohing the idea, and has even talked about putting its cable holdings up for sale. Cable providers, which could potentially compete with phone companies, have encountered many more engineering problems with phone delivery than they had anticipated. The world of old media, even with deregulation, is looking more and more like a safe haven for the most

entrenched monopolies in the communications business.

Murdoch's two faces

Rupert Murdoch, the Darth Vader of megamedia, plays Luke Skywalker when it suits him. He's been waging a bitter fight to get Time Warner to carry his 24-hour Fox News service, but Time Warner says it already has plenty of news programming with CNN and MSNBC. This, astonishingly, prompted Murdoch to decry "the monopolistic control of spectrum by a few cable companies." Never mind Murdoch's relentless striving for agenda-setting control over content and audience, or his comment only days later that "we're entering a period where monopoly is pretty much impossible because of modern technology and the Internet." When angling for regulatory favors, Murdoch assumed the good guy role once again, insisting that all

broadcasters should commit to "public service." But when it came time to air presidential debates, his Fox network stations carried baseball instead.

Pig roast

The Clinton administration has appealed to the Supreme Court an appeals court decision finding the Communications Decency Act unconstitutional. The law, passed last February, made it illegal to transmit "indecent" material to minors over the Internet. The court, however, ruled that regulating the Internet for content "could burn the global village to roast the pig." Civil liberties advocates worked hard to educate the appeals court about the new technology, even setting up computers in the courtroom and giving judges Internet tutorials. Many believe similar efforts will now be necessary with the Supreme Court.

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TOMORROW'S NEWS TONIGHT

By Steve Brodner



Dole, in stunning shift, becomes campaign finance reform champion; sweeps to landslide victory. Aleksandr Lebed, named chief of staff, thwarts Inauguration Day assassination attempt by Dwayne Andreas.

THE SHORES OF TRIPOLI

The scene was replete with ancient Ottoman symbolism. In early October, Necmettin Erbakan, Turkey's first Islamist prime minister, went to a tent in the Libyan desert to sign a billion-dollar gas deal with Muammar el-Qaddafi. He ended up getting an earful from the leader of a country that was once among the most backward provinces of the empire.

"Turkey's foreign policy is wrong from A to Z," pronounced Qaddafi, as a clearly distressed Erbakan stood at his side. "Turkey, a country under American control, has opened up its soil to American bases." If that wasn't effrontery enough, the Libyan leader then brought up the "K" word. "Kurdistan should be established. ... This nation should have its place in the Middle Eastern sun."

The very mention of Kurdish statehood sent Turkey's press and politicians into a predictable lather. Under the headline "Night of Shame," the daily *Sabah* wrote indignantly that "a barefoot Bedouin stood in front of Erbakan ... and hurled insults at Turkey." Even the Islamist daily *Zaman* admitted "it was as if an atom bomb had fallen on the tent."

As far as his secularist opponents were concerned, Erbakan, 69, got what was coming. Upon arriving in office last July as senior partner in a coalition government with former Prime Minister Tansu Çiller's center-right True Path Party, Erbakan said he intended to steer his country's foreign policy away from its traditional Western orientation and re-Islamize a state ruled since its inception by pro-Western, secularist forces. A veteran of Turkish politics, Erbakan had once spoken of creating an "Islamic NATO." As leader of Refah, or the

Islamic Welfare Party, he has been outspoken in his opposition to U.S. planes defending the Kurdish safe haven from Turkish bases.

Erbakan made Teheran his first destination as prime minister, signing a \$23 billion oil deal. That brought forth equally predictable breast-beating from the U.S. government and press about a new fundamentalist threat in Ankara. If Turkey remains in NATO, the *Wall Street Journal* hypothesized, "Mr. Erbakan will have access to sensitive intelligence reports ... concerning the very Islamic terrorists with whom he has repeatedly expressed sympathy."

Nothing could be farther from the truth. At home, Erbakan has done little to Islamize Turkish society. Abroad, he has continued to toe the American line. He let U.S. jets continue to use Turkish air bases in July and said nothing when the United States fired cruise missiles at Iraq in September.

Billions of dollars in U.S. military and economic aid alone do not explain Erbakan's cautiousness. There is Turkish politics to consider. His party holds less than 25 percent of the seats

in the Turkish parliament. His coalition allies are determinedly pro-Western and secularist.

Mesut Yilmaz, head of the opposition, has been highly critical of Erbakan's moves. After the Libya fiasco, Yilmaz came within a handful of votes of getting a parliamentary censure of the prime minister. Under Turkish law, a vote of no-confidence would have followed within a week.

Looming behind parliament is the staunchly secularist, pro-American Turkish military. Earlier this year, it dismissed an officer for visiting Mecca while on duty. More recently, it forced Erbakan to sign an arms deal with Israel. Three times since World War II, the military has stepped in when it thought civilian politicians were threatening Turkey's secular, pro-Western orientation.

Whether Erbakan is genuine in his Islamist proclivities or not, the United States and the Turkish military will keep him on a short leash. The Qaddafi snub only weakens his position further.

—James Ciment

Behind the Times

THE NEW YORK TIMES HAS FINALLY DEIGNED TO EXAMINE ALLEGATIONS RAISED BY *San Jose Mercury News* reporter Gary Webb that CIA-backed contra fundraisers wholesaled cocaine to a Los Angeles crack kingpin. Reporter Tim Golden writes on October 18 that he found "scant proof to support the paper's contention that Nicaraguan rebel officials linked to the CIA played a central role in spreading crack through Los Angeles and other cities." Golden reached his conclusion after interviewing "more than two dozen current and former rebels, CIA officials and narcotics agents." Nowhere in his story does Golden acknowledge the two-year investigation by the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Narcotics, Terrorism and International Operations chaired by Sen. John Kerry (D-MA). Covering the release of the subcommittee report in April 1989, *Times* reporter Richard Berke wrote: "In pursuing foreign policy goals the Reagan administration often sacrificed efforts to curb drug trafficking. ... [The subcommittee] cited examples of how policy toward the rebels in Nicaragua and relations with the Bahamas, Honduras and Panama had overridden programs to keep drugs out of the country." Berke further noted the testimony of Jeffrey Feldman, a former U.S. Attorney in Miami. Feldman told Kerry's subcommittee that Justice Department officials told him that representatives of the department, the Drug Enforcement Administration and the FBI met in 1986 "to discuss how Sen. Kerry's efforts [to push for hearings] could be undermined."

—J.B.

BORDERS WARS

Employees of a Borders Books & Music store in Chicago have become the first workers to organize a union in a national bookstore chain. In early October, the store's 45 non-managerial employees voted 28 to 17 in favor of joining Local 881 of the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union, which represents more than 37,000 workers, mostly at regional drug and grocery stores. Now, as the newly organized employees sit down to iron out their first contract with the company, thousands of employees at other bookstores across the country will be watching to see what happens.

Workers at the Chicago store decided to organize in response to low pay and unreasonable work rules. Chain bookstore workers are not handsomely paid: New full-time hires at the Borders store on Clark Street earn \$6.50 an hour, or about \$260 a week before deductions for insurance and taxes. New employees in some Borders stores in suburban Chicago start at about 40 cents less an hour than downtown employees. Adding to the problem of low pay, Borders recently changed health care providers, increasing workers' share of their insurance premiums by a hefty 23 percent (for smokers, the increase was 73 percent, according to employee Greg Popek).

Popek says employees were even more upset last summer when Borders asked them to sign a statement allowing the company to fire any worker "at will." Workers found it increasingly difficult to square this treatment, and their meager pay, with glowing reports in the financial press of Borders' record profits. (The company operates nearly 150 stores nationwide, and plans to open 40 more next year.) "Here was a company that is growing very quickly, yet it seemed to be turning its back on the foundation of the store—its employees," says Borders staffer Chris Grant, who, along with Popek, led the organizing drive.

Popek and Grant were convinced

store employees could do better in a union, and in late August they filed a petition with the National Labor Relations Board to certify a union election. Borders quickly swung into high gear to stop the drive. Managers and senior executives convened endless meetings in an attempt to convince employees that the company had their best interests at heart. And in a last-ditch effort to woo employees away from the union days before the vote, Borders CEO Richard Flanagan appeared at the store, promising to review the company's stock-option plan and hire a compensation consultant.

Even though employees have ratified the union, they still face the tough job of negotiating a contract. Any contract concessions Borders makes to its unionized employees in Chicago could cause problems for the company when dealing with non-union staff at its other stores, and according to Popek, Borders has made it clear that it

intends to give up nothing during negotiations. Employees fear that Borders management will drag out negotiations and force a strike, which could lead to a break in the union ranks. It will be hard to keep workers loyal to the union, given Borders' high employee turnover rate—typical in retail businesses—combined with the fact that the newly unionized employees will have to pay union dues of between \$16 and \$20 a month whether they have a contract or not.

—Lewis Lazare

SOURCES

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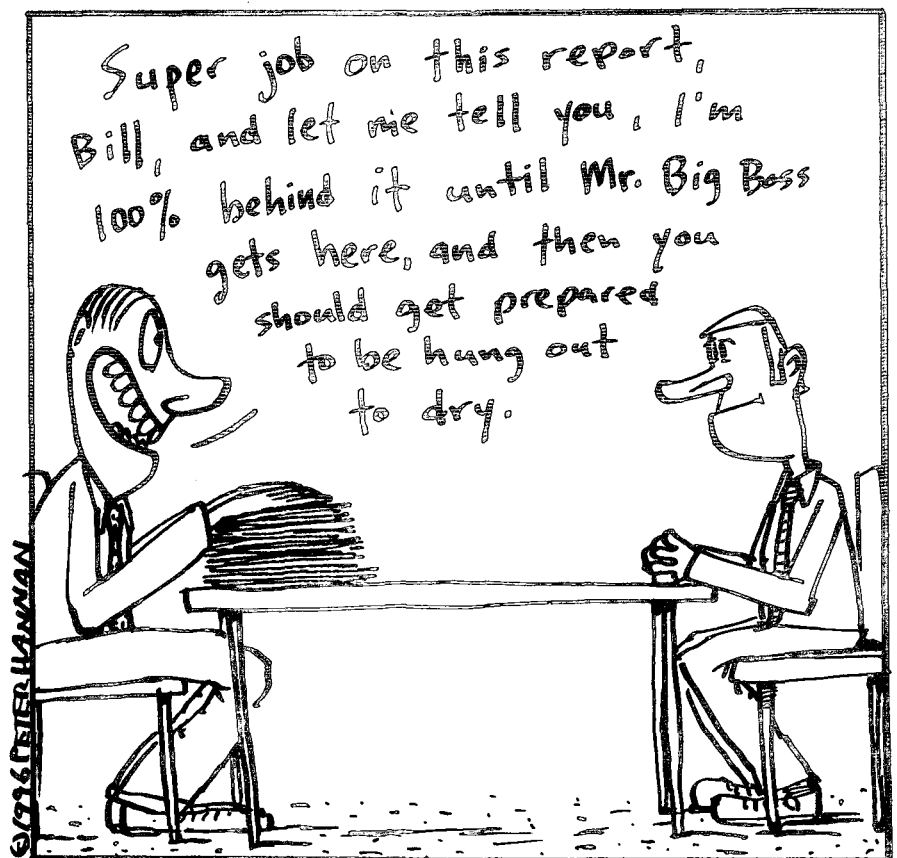
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THE ADVENTURES OF A HUGE MOUTH

By Peter Hannan



T H E F I R S T S T O N E

RECIPE FOR DISASTER

By Joel Bleifuss

Agribusiness corporations have long hoped to make GMOs (genetically modified organisms) a permanent, and inescapable, feature of our daily diet. But to get to that point, chemical giants such as the St. Louis-based Monsanto Co. and the Swiss company Ciba-Geigy AG will have to overcome consumer, environmental and public health organizations that fear this pell-mell rush to a genetically modified future. And they'll have to somehow get past the roadblocks Mother Nature has put in their way.

Three of Monsanto's bioengineered marvels are in the process of going bust. The company's artificial bovine growth hormone (rBGH), introduced in February 1994, has not lived up to its promise. Although the drug does increase milk production, the resultant health problems in cattle outweigh the benefits from the extra milk produced, as critics warned they would. In April, *Business Week* reported that Wall Street insiders were predicting that rBGH would be pulled off the market by the end of the year. Furthermore, the Pure Food Campaign obtained a letter, signed by 10 scientists who have done rBGH research for Monsanto, that reveals a 55 percent drop in sales of the wonder drug between February 1995 and February 1996.

After two years in stores, the Flavr Savr tomato is now off the market and heading for the dumpster. The tomato, which was developed by a company in which Monsanto has a half stake, had been genetically engineered to taste like a homegrown tomato yet be sturdy enough to ship across country. (The current grocery store tomato lost its taste in the process of being bred for ease of packing and shipping.) The Flavr Savr's problem is that it was developed in California and won't grow well in Florida's sandy soils and different climate.

Now, Monsanto's genetically engineered cotton, Bollgard, is proving a failure. The cotton, which accounts for 13 percent of the nation's annual crop this year, had been altered to produce a substance that acts as a natural pesti-

cide to three insects that eat cotton. But the Bollgard cotton is not working as planned. As James Wilbur, an analyst with Smith Barney, told the *Wall Street Journal*, "If genetic technology doesn't work on a product like this, it calls into question the whole long-term strategy of the company."

Monsanto had sold the Bollgard seeds to farmers with brochures that pictured a bollworm and advised: "You'll see these in your cotton and that's okay. Don't spray. Just relax. Bollgard will protect your cotton." But a heavy bollworm infestation this summer, combined with the failure of Bollgard to perform as expected, forced the company to change course. Monsanto began telling farmers that spraying might be necessary to save their crops. In fact, Abbott Laboratories mar-

keted its DiPel insecticide, "which contains a blend of five or more toxins," as the chemical solution for growers who planted Monsanto's Bollgard.

In theory, Bollgard cotton works because it has been genetically engineered to contain genes from the bacterium *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt), which is harmless to humans but in high enough doses kills insects. Yet the long-term implications are frightening. Bt, a natural substance, is a key weapon in the organic farmers' battle with pests. By making this natural pesticide an integral part of cotton and other crops such as soybeans and corn, Monsanto and other biotech firms will hasten the evolution of Bt-resistant insects. Indeed, Monsanto itself admits that it is only a matter of time before the bugs develop a resistance to Bollgard.

Earlier this year Monsanto introduced another genetically altered product likely to turn out as ill-advised as rBGH, Bollgard and the Flavr Savr tomato: the Roundup Ready soybean. Roundup Ready has been altered to include a gene from a bacterium that makes the plant resistant to glyphosate, the key toxin in Monsanto's Roundup herbicide. Farmers who plant Roundup Ready beans will be able to spray the herbicide on their fields without killing their soybeans.

Ciba-Geigy has similar plans for Maximizer, a corn hybrid loaded with three altered genes, which the company introduced last spring. Like Monsanto's cotton, Ciba-Geigy's corn contains a Bt gene that makes the corn toxic to pests, in this case the corn-borer larvae. Like Roundup Ready, Maximizer is also built to resist one of Ciba Geigy's herbicides, in this case glufosinate, manufactured under the brand name Basta.

Maximizer has been approved for sale in Canada and the United States, but European countries, in particular Britain, Sweden, Austria and Denmark, are balking. The European Union has so far refused to approve the corn for import. The impasse could escalate into a trade war between the

United States and Europe.

Europeans are concerned that Ciba-Geigy's corn will lead to the development of Bt-resistant corn borers. They also fear that the genes that make Roundup Ready soybeans and Maximizer corn resistant to the Monsanto and Ciba-Geigy herbicides could transfer to weeds, making those weeds impervious to the herbicides. Such resistance has already been observed in Denmark, where rapeseed, a native European plant used to make vegetable oil, was genetically altered to resist a pesticide. That resistance then jumped from the rapeseed plant to neighboring weeds.

Finally, some European scientists are worried about a bacterium gene in Ciba-Geigy's corn that conveys resistance to the antibiotic ampicillin. Ciba-Geigy claims that this gene serves no purpose other than as a handy marker for scientists to determine which plants have the added genes. Some scientists, however, fear that the gene could be passed to the cattle who eat the corn, and from there, spread to people who eat the cattle. Both animals and humans would then become resistant to ampicillin, an antibiotic doctors and veterinarians commonly use to fight infections. For this reason, the British government's Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes has sought to ban the doctored corn.

On top of all this, some genetically modified foodstuffs have proved dangerous to people who suffer from allergies. For example, Pioneer Hi-Bred International, a Des Moines-based seed company, developed a genetically modified soybean using genes from Brazil nuts. But the company had to abandon the product before it hit the market because people with nut allergies, which occasionally are fatal, were found to be allergic to the new soybeans.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration requires that genetically modified organisms derived from products to which many people are allergic be tested and labeled. But an editorial in the *New England Journal of Medicine* last March argued that the policy did not go far enough: "Because FDA requirements do not apply to foods that are rarely allergenic or to donor organisms of unknown allergenicity, the policy would appear to favor industry over consumer protection." The editorial called for the labeling of all foods containing genetically altered organisms, concluding that "industry benefits when the public is convinced that transgenic foods are safe, and stronger federal regulations would encourage such public confidence."

Europeans seem to share this sentiment. According to

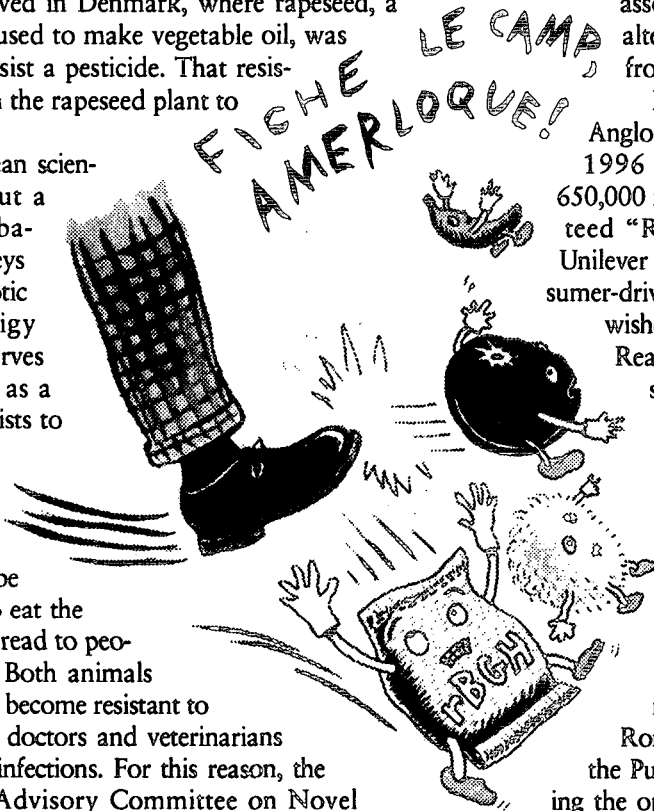
recent surveys, 85 percent of Europeans would choose not to eat genetically modified foods if given the choice. This mistrust of bioengineered foods has put U.S. soybean growers—who export 40 percent of their crop to Europe—in a precarious position. Even though the European Union approved Monsanto's Roundup Ready soybeans earlier this year, EuroCommerce, the Union's major trade association, has demanded that genetically altered soybeans be labeled and separated from regular soybeans.

Last month, the German unit of the Anglo-Dutch food giant Unilever canceled all 1996 orders for U.S. soybeans, totaling 650,000 metric tons, unless they could be guaranteed "Roundup Ready soybean-free." As a Unilever spokesperson explained, "We are a consumer-driven company and we have to take their wishes into account." Even though Roundup Ready makes up only 2 percent of the U.S. soybean crop, U.S. soybean suppliers cannot comply with the demand of Unilever's German unit because Roundup Ready beans are not separated from the traditional varieties.

A similar consumer backlash may be brewing in the United States. "Where agribusiness has miscalculated is in thinking that you can operate in today's global economy under the rules of the consumer be damned," says Ronnie Cummins, the national director of the Pure Food Campaign, which is spearheading the opposition to bioengineered foods in this country. His group is calling for a global boycott of 10 processed foods that will soon contain Roundup Ready soybeans and Maximizer corn, including Coca-Cola, Fritos corn chips, Kraft salad dressings, Similac infant formula and McDonald's french fries.

The U.S. government, however, shows no sign of abandoning its support of bioengineering. Campaigning last month in Iowa, Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman said the United States will stand behind its genetically altered produce and oppose any European labeling requirements as a trade violation. "We've got to make sure that sound science prevails, not what I call historic culture, which is not based on sound science," he said. "Europe has a much greater sensitivity to the culture of food, as opposed to the science of food. But in the modern world, we just have to keep the pressure on the science. Good science must prevail in these decisions."

But in supporting Monsanto's right to grow and export genetically engineered food crops, Glickman appears interested less in "good science" than in making sure "corporate science" prevails—the kind of science that historically has guaranteed short-term profits for corporate America and long-term problems for the rest of us.



CORPORATE AMERICA

Starbucked!

W

*America's
gourmet coffee
giant uses its
size and deep
pockets to
muscle out
independent
coffee shops.*

By Nicole Nolan

With its funkily clad patrons, intimate tables and smoky atmosphere, Scenes Coffee House and Dramatist Bookstore in Chicago is the essence of bohemia. Born out of the Chicago theater revival of the '80s, Scenes has, for the last decade, been a well-known hangout in the city's Lakeview neighborhood: the place to see and be seen.

"It's a landmark. Everybody knows where Scenes is. It's a great place. They have scripts from almost every play ever written. You can pick one up and read it while you have your coffee," says Nancy Weiler, who was a Scenes regular while a student at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Come December, however, Scenes will be shutting down. It's not that Chicagoans don't want a drama bookstore-cum-coffeehouse: With a devoted clientele and a prime location, Scenes does good busi-

ness. But when owner Jamie Asch asked for a new lease, his landlord, Kenard Management, refused.

Kenard Management, however, will be renting a corner store in the same building complex to the coffee chain Starbucks. Kenard gave no reason for suddenly kicking Scenes out after a decade but it wasn't hard for Asch to put two and two together.

Credited with changing the way Americans drink coffee, Starbucks has, in the past five years, metamorphosed from a mid-sized West Coast chain to an international phenomenon. Its success owes much to an aggressive business ethic that targets affluent urban markets for specialty coffees. Starbucks' modus operandi is to enter desirable areas quickly and in force, driving out competitors in order to establish itself as the leading coffee retailer. Its well-informed and well-funded real estate department is willing to bargain hard and spend large sums of money for the best locations.

Scenes and numerous other small cafes fear Starbucks not so much because the chain will provide competition, but because it has been known to kick small coffee shops out of their locations before they even have a chance to compete. Nationwide, Starbucks has drawn bitter resentment from small coffee retailers who describe its business tactics as "ruthless" and "predatory"—and from local residents who begrudge Starbucks' invasion of their neighborhoods.

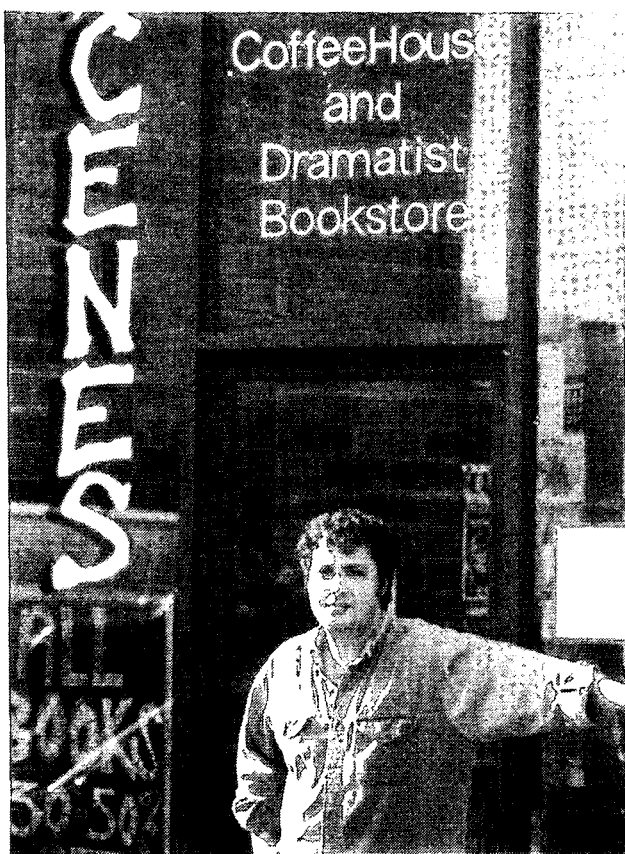
Starbucks has carefully crafted its image as a caring, community-based company. Starbucks executives are quick to point out that the chain is the largest North American corporate donor to the international relief agency CARE (see sidebar), and that even part-time workers receive a benefits package that includes medical coverage and a stock purchase plan.

Starbucks presents itself not as a chain in the McDonald's tradition, but as a local hangout that provides camaraderie, respect and a comfortable place to recharge. "We are not in the coffee business serving people," states Starbucks' 1995 annual report. "We are in the people business serving coffee. ... At the crossroads of the community, Starbucks offers a tranquil corner where you can fit in without thinking. You are welcome here, as interesting and individual as you are."

"Starbucks," says Scott Bedbury, the company's senior vice president of marketing, "is good for society. People need a third place to spend 10 minutes each day away from the stress and strain of life. Our position is we're trying to align ourselves with one of the greatest movements toward finding a connection with your soul."

The "third place"—the gathering place outside of home and work—is a hallowed notion in Starbucks lore. Starbucks employees reverently tell the tale of how Starbucks

PHOTO: KAT BOYCE



CEO Howard Schultz traveled to Italy in 1983 and was so impressed with the country's coffee bars and the role they played in the community that he vowed to bring Italian coffee bar culture to America.

**Jamie Asch, owner of Scenes
Coffee House in Chicago.**

When Schultz bought Starbucks from its founders in 1987, it was an 11-store chain. Featuring a unique dark-roast coffee, Italian-style espresso, and a variety of creative espresso-and-milk concoctions, Starbucks rode (and helped inspire) the coffeehouse craze and taste for specialty coffee that swept the country in the late '80s and '90s.

In 1992, the company went public in order to finance its plans for rapid expansion. So far, it's been phenomenally successful. Despite spending only \$10 million for advertising since its founding in 1971, Starbucks has become a household word. From 1991 to 1995, sales rose from \$65.3 to \$465 million a year. The company is highly regarded by investors. "Five hundred dollars invested in Starbucks in 1992 would be worth \$14,300 today," says John Kelley, a securities analyst with Edward D. Jones & Co.

Starbucks now has 970 stores (300 opened this fiscal year alone) and plans for 2,000 by the turn of the century. It claims to serve over 3 million consumers each week. While sales in its retail stores still account for 87 percent of Starbucks' business, the chain has also expanded into ice cream, jazz CDs, soda pop and even a coffee-flavored dark-malt beer.

Becoming the leading specialty coffee retailer is not just about producing tasty drinks; it's also about making sure you get high-visibility, high-traffic locations in the upscale, hip areas where specialty coffees sell. "The Company believes that its customers choose among retailers primarily on the basis of quality and convenience, and to a lesser extent, on price," states Starbucks' 1995 annual report.

"Convenience" means making sure that every time a potential customer turns a corner, he or she will find a Starbucks. The company has become a skilled practitioner of the technique of "clustering"—that is, of placing several stores within a relatively small radius. In Manhattan's Upper East Side, for example, Starbucks has six stores within a third of a square mile (see map).

Starbucks' successful expansion has been spearheaded by a real estate department that is hard-hitting and well-connected with brokerage networks. "In many ways, the specialty coffee business in retail has been a real estate exercise," says Roger Scheumann, a former Starbucks wholesale sales representative who left the company in 1991 to start his own business, Quartermaine Coffee Roasters, on the East Coast. "Starbucks is very aggressive in real estate and that's resulted in Starbucks getting a lot of very good locations."

Scheumann should know. When he was negotiating to lease space for the second of Quartermaine's three retail stores in an exclusive food shopping district in Bethesda, Md., in 1993, Starbucks intervened. They offered the landlord what Scheumann describes as "considerably more rent" to take over the space. When the landlord refused, Starbucks offered to buy the building.

Norman Weintraub, the head of two coffee shops in the San Francisco area and an investor in a third, had a similar run-in with Starbucks. Starbucks had approached Weintraub in the early '90s, offering to buy his business, but he refused. The chain, however, would not give up. In 1994, Weintraub found out that, unbeknownst to him, Starbucks had offered his landlord three times his rent, plus a \$30,000 "signing bonus," to take over the space that his coffee shop had occupied for seven years in the suburban town of Mill Valley.

Starbucks withdrew the offer when it discovered that Weintraub had a three-year option to renew the lease. But Weintraub knew that to keep the space, he had to match the chain's offer. He agreed to pay \$4,900 a month in rent—up from \$1,750 a month—in addition to a lump sum payment of \$30,000. He says this would have put him out of business if he had owned just the one coffee shop.

"The whole thing was pretty upsetting," says Weintraub. "We started that business from nothing and we're a big fixture in that town."

Weintraub says he doesn't mind the competition. After all, he shares the Mill Valley strip with several other specialty coffee retailers, and he didn't cry foul when Starbucks moved in a couple of blocks from his other store in San Francisco. "The thing I really resent is this deep-pockets approach—going behind people's backs and writing big checks," says Weintraub. "Starbucks is very, very aggressive."

sive. In Marin County, they have a bad name.”

A closer look at the case of Scenes in Chicago shows a similar “buy them or crush them” approach on the part of the coffee giant. Starbucks had wanted to move into a location in the building complex occupied by Scenes for a number of years but couldn’t because Scenes had a no-competition clause in its lease stipulating that no other coffee shops could move into the complex.

Scenes owner Asch says he was willing to overlook the no-competition clause and allow Starbucks to move in beside Scenes in exchange for a couple of concessions: He wanted money from the chain to compensate him for the business he estimated he would lose as a result of Starbucks being on the corner, and he wanted Starbucks to sign an agreement saying it would not make exclusive deals with local suppliers. “We had heard that one of the things Starbucks does when it moves into a place is to make deals with purveyors,” Asch says. “For example, they might say to someone, ‘We will buy your scones but only if you don’t sell them to anyone else in our location.’ We wanted them to

sign a formal agreement saying they wouldn’t do that.”

Asch says Starbucks at first agreed to sign an agreement, but then reneged. Suddenly, they walked away from negotiations. “We didn’t hear anything else from them and the next thing we know, we asked for a new lease and were denied,” he says.

Asked whether Starbucks was paying a significantly higher rent than Scenes, Gerry Gedroic of the complex’s landlord, Kenard Management, declined to comment, saying only that the Starbucks store is larger and in a corner location.

Starbucks executives refuse to comment on the specifics of the Chicago or Mill Valley incidents. At Starbucks’ head office in Seattle, company spokesperson Jeanne McKay issued a blanket statement, saying the company did not want to revisit specific instances. “It has never been Starbucks’ intention to put anyone out of business and we adhere to standard real estate practices when obtaining new locations,” she said.

As for accusations regarding the company’s predatory practices, Vice President Roly Morris denied that Starbucks uses its financial clout to edge small retailers out. “We’re an extremely fiscally responsible organization,” he said. “When we’re looking at real estate, we’re looking to pay the market value. It would be fiscally irresponsible of us to artificially inflate the price.”

Morris, who is in charge of the chain’s ventures in Canada and the Pacific Northwest, pointed to several instances during the chain’s recent expansion into Toronto where local coffee retailers have opened stores in prime locations that Starbucks had investigated and then rejected because the rent was too high.

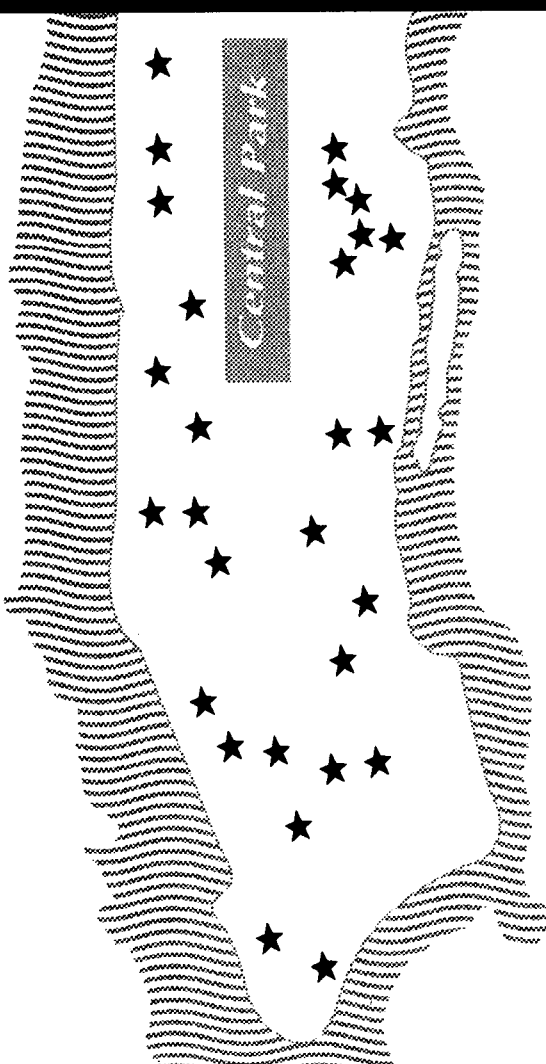
It’s true that Starbucks can’t afford to throw money around indiscriminately. Its seam-splitting pace of expansion means that the company is currently spending far more than it makes and has to operate with one eye firmly trained on the bottom line. But for prime locations that promise to produce high-grossing stores, it may well be worth Starbucks’ while to pay rents well above the going rate for those areas.

Last month, Dooney’s Cafe in Toronto seemed destined to go the way of Chicago’s Scenes. On September 6, the owner of the downtown building Dooney’s occupies handed Dooney’s owner Graziano Marchese a note demanding that he vacate the premises by October 31. The landlord told him a Starbucks outlet was moving in. Marchese had not even had a chance to renegotiate his lease.

But when the patrons of Dooney’s, a 15-year-old institution in Toronto’s bohemian Annex district, found out that their hangout was about to be taken over by a Starbucks, they went ballistic. Four hundred locals showed up at an anti-Starbucks strategy meeting a few days after the announcement. The next Saturday, 200 people (among them a city councilor and a member of parliament) marched in front of a downtown Starbucks, chanting “Save Dooney’s” and toting placards that read “Save the local economy. Stop Starbucks.”

The fuss was a public relations disaster for Starbucks.

STARBUCKS takes Manhattan



Who CAREs?

To buff its image as a socially responsible company, Starbucks formed a partnership in 1991 with the relief and development agency CARE, which has programs in many of the countries from which Starbucks buys its coffee. The company has given CARE over \$349,000 in five years. On top of direct donations, the company also gives \$2 from the sale of a coffee selection package, called a "CARE sampler," in its stores.

Amounting to a mere .18 percent of Starbucks' net sales, the CARE initiative has proven an excellent investment. CARE awarded Starbucks its International Humanitarian award last May and praised the coffee chain as a fantastic corporate partner. "It really helps raise awareness among Canadians and Americans about what's going on in the developing world," says CARE marketing head Kathleen O'Brien of the collaboration. "It gives us an outreach outlet around the country."

Its support of CARE notwithstanding, Starbucks continues to be embarrassed by conflicts between the company's "caring" rhetoric and its corporate practice. In February 1995, the U.S./Guatemala Labor Education Project, a Chicago human rights group, launched a 25-city protest against the low wages that Starbucks' Central American suppliers paid their Guatemalan coffee-bean pickers. The group revealed that the price of one pound of coffee in a Starbucks retail store was the equivalent of a full week's wage for a Guatemalan bean picker.

At its shareholders' meeting four days later, Starbucks announced it would produce a "Corporate Code of Conduct." The code of conduct the company released in October included guidelines for coffee selection that stated that Starbucks' goal was to purchase coffee from producers who "share its values." A year later, Starbucks has yet to take any concrete steps to implement the code.

This summer, the company's much-touted claims of good labor practices were undermined when workers from six Starbucks outlets in Vancouver applied for union certification as members of the Canadian Auto Workers Union. Workers say they are unionizing to get better wages (they currently earn \$7.50 Canadian, 50 cents above the minimum wage) and more control over their shift schedules. They also cite a decline in labor relations as the company has grown. According to Starbucks Senior Vice President Scott Bedbury, Starbucks faced a "union issue" several years ago—he wouldn't say exactly where or when—"but it went away." This is the first time in the company's history that workers have applied for certification.

—N.N.

in Vancouver (where a Starbucks was greeted with paint bombs and graffiti), in Southern California's Newport Beach, and in the Bay area, including Berkeley, Oakland and San Francisco's North Beach.

For many communities, the issue goes beyond Starbucks to the effects that chain stores in general have on neighborhoods. The Minneapolis neighborhood of Linden Hills was able to prevent the entry of a Starbucks two years ago. There, Starbucks wasn't taking over the space of a local cafe, but residents still worried that Starbucks was the thin edge of the wedge—the beginning of a chain incursion that would raise rents, increase traffic and ruin local character.

Linden Hills resident Anne-Marie Kronick remembers a meeting where 360 angry locals confronted Starbucks representatives. "They were just hollering, 'We don't want you, go away,'" says Kronick. "And the Starbucks guy was giving the corporation mission, about the third place and all that, and people were saying 'But we already have that.'"

Residents were able to stymie Starbucks' arrival by appealing to a parking by-law. Now, Linden Hills city councilor Steve Minn says he is in the process of figuring out how zoning regulations can be used to keep chains out.

In San Francisco, where feeling runs high not only against Starbucks but against chains in general, the municipal government is designing what it calls a "neighborhood preservation package." "We legally cannot shut out chains. We've gone through it backwards and forwards," says city staffer Mindy Linetzky.

What local governments can do, though, is design ways to give residents advance notice before chains move in. San Francisco plans to amend its municipal code to require applicants for retail spaces to post a sign on the premises about their intentions for 15 days before asking for a permit. The city is also setting up neighborhood councils to review local businesses.

San Francisco has forbidden the building of new coffeehouses in certain neighborhoods—like North Beach—on the grounds that there are already enough.

In Toronto, "Friends of Dooney's" members aren't putting much hope in government intervention. "I don't think commercial and real estate law will be particularly friendly to this kind of thing," says Lynn Spink, a former urban planner and member of the protest group. "I can't think of a legal way that would work. In the end, I think it is people in the community getting together and fighting that really has an effect."

Nicole Nolan is a freelance writer based in Toronto.

The chain quickly hired a PR firm and took out a full page ad in the *Toronto Star*, at a cost of \$42,000, asserting that Starbucks hadn't known that Dooney's wanted to stay. It was to no avail. Reporters flocked to Dooney's to record the cafe's sad fate. Radio talk show hosts and columnists at all three of Toronto's dailies backed up the protesters.

Remarkably, Starbucks backed down. At first, it tried to get out of its lease, but the landlord refused. Now Starbucks is negotiating to sublet the location to the Dooney's owner.

Toronto's Annex residents are not the only community to resist the introduction of a Starbucks into their neighborhood. The chain's arrival has met opposition in Minneapolis,

CAMPAIGN '96

Money talks

*Campaign
finance
laws were
dead letters
in the race for
cash that
marked this
year's
campaign.*

By Anthony Corrado

Frank MacConnell died a few weeks before the election without getting his wish. MacConnell was the sporting goods shop owner who urged President Bill Clinton and House Speaker Newt Gingrich at a barbecue in Claremont, N.H., in June 1995 to form a commission to address the issue of campaign finance reform. The president and the speaker agreed that it was a good idea, and engaged in a now infamous handshake to affirm their pledge to act. The commission, however, was never created.

Not surprisingly, Congress allowed another legislative session to pass without taking meaningful action to heal a gravely ill system. Instead, Democrats and Republicans alike engaged in an unprecedented race for campaign dollars. The result was a record level of campaign spending, guaranteeing that this will be the most expensive elec-

tion in American history. Although the final checks have not been counted, most experts estimate that spending on the presidential race will exceed the record \$550 million spent in 1992 by as much as \$200 million, and spending on congressional races is likely to reach the \$800 million mark, or \$120 million more than the amount spent four years ago.

When Congress reformed the campaign finance laws in the aftermath of the Watergate scandal, it sought to put an end to soaring campaign costs and the influence of big money in federal elections. Under the law, the Democratic and Republican presidential nominees receive a full public subsidy—which amounted to \$62 million each for Clinton and Bob Dole in 1996—to pay for their general election campaigns. Other candidates who receive at least 5 percent of the vote are eligible for a proportionate share of this funding. In exchange, the candidates must not raise any private funds to spend on their general election campaigns, limiting their spending to the amount of the subsidy.

The law also allows the national party committees to spend a limited amount on election-related activities to assist their candidates. These funds, known as “coordinated expenditures” because the purpose of the expenditures can be decided in coordination with a presidential candidate, are subject to federal contribution and spending limits. In 1996, for example, each party could spend no more than \$12 million to help its presidential ticket.

Although the rules established by Congress in 1974 are clear, candidates have always found ingenious ways of circumventing them. The amounts raised and spent in past campaigns, however, pale in comparison with the financial excesses experienced in this election. Indeed, in 1996, the amount of campaign activity conducted outside the parameters of the law was so extensive that the limits imposed by the law were rendered meaningless.

Both parties, for instance, raised record amounts of “soft money.” These funds are not subject to federal limits because they are used to pay for “party-building” activities. Such activities, which include voter registration programs and generic “Vote Republican” or “Vote Democratic” advertising, are exempt from federal regulation because they are not considered “election-related” as defined under the law. Consequently, the parties have free rein to raise and spend as much as they want in this way.

In 1992, the Democrats and Republicans raised a combined total of \$83 million in soft money. This year, the parties hoped to raise more than three times that much. By July 1, the Democrats had already pulled in over \$70 million in soft money, more than twice the \$34.5 million they raised in 1992. The Republicans had brought in \$84 million, compared to \$49 million in 1992. These figures do not include

RNC TV AD: 30 sec.: "More Talk"

VIDEO

Disclaimer: "PAID FOR BY THE REPUBLICAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE"

Footage of Clinton. Superimposed (appearing sequentially): "A lot of talk from Clinton about balancing the budget."

Various clips of Clinton making the quotes.

Superimposed (appearing sequentially): "No wonder Clinton opposes an amendment to balance the budget."

Quick clips of Clinton.

Double screen of Bill Clinton.

Superimposed (appearing sequentially): "Talk is cheap. Double talk is expensive. Tell Mr. Clinton to support the Balanced Budget Amendment."

AUDIO

ANNOUNCER: "For four years, you've heard a lot of talk from Bill Clinton about balancing the budget."

CLINTON: "I would present a five year plan to balance the budget."

"...we could do it in 7 years."

"...I think we can reach it in 9 years."

"...balance the budget in 10 years."

"...I think we could reach it in 8 years."

"...so we're between 7 and 9 now."

ANNOUNCER: "No wonder Bill Clinton opposes a Constitutional Amendment to balance the budget."

CLINTON: "Seven, nine, ten, eight, five."

ANNOUNCER: "Talk is cheap. Double talk is expensive. Tell Mr. Clinton to support the Balanced Budget Amendment."

the most aggressive fundraising efforts, which had yet to get under way by July.

The parties generated these enormous sums by courting the types of large "fat-cat" contributions from individuals, corporations and other special interests that are supposed to be illegal in federal campaigns. Many of these gifts were solicited by the same personnel who filled the coffers of the Clinton and Dole primary campaigns, but then shifted to party fundraising for the general election period. The two presidential candidates played their part. Although banned from raising money for their own campaigns, they are allowed to serve as the main draw at party fundraisers.

Not surprisingly, most of the largest gifts are from corporations or groups that face pressing issues in Washington. By July, tobacco companies, feeling threatened by the Clinton administration's efforts to reduce children's access to tobacco and to further regulate sales, had already donated \$4.6 million in soft money—\$3.9 million to Republicans and about \$700,000 to Democrats. Philip Morris alone had given more than \$2 million, with about \$1.7 million going to Republicans. Telecommunications companies, whose future is increasingly linked to the decisions of federal regulators, had contributed \$4.6 million, with \$2.5 million shelled out to Republicans and \$2.1 million to Democrats. MCI Telecommunications was the leading donor in this category, giving \$767,000

that was divided roughly 3-to-2 in favor of the Democrats. AT&T was also writing big checks, giving \$743,000 that was divided evenly between the two parties. The Association of Trial Lawyers had contributed \$518,000, with \$361,000 going to Democrats and \$157,000 to Republicans.

Soft money, however, was only one of the ways that major corporations sought to flex their political muscle. Business interests also gave substantial sums through political action committees (PACs) and individual gifts from corporate executives. As a result, business money swamped all other sources of funding in the presidential and congressional

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al campaigns. An analysis conducted by the Center for Responsive Politics of donations as of July 1 revealed that business groups had contributed \$242 million—nearly seven times more than the \$35 million that came from labor, and more than 20 times the \$10.6 million given by “issue-oriented” groups. Wall Street, in the midst of a bull market, led the charge, with the financial sector—securities firms, banks, and the insurance and real estate industries—giving a combined \$59.8 million. Nearly two-thirds of this money went to the Republicans.

The parties spent much of their soft money on major national advertising campaigns designed to assist their presidential candidates. While both parties had done some generic advertising in the past, those efforts were usually limited to general party messages and confined to the weeks just before the election. In 1996, this changed. The “issue advocacy” ads broadcast this year presented partisan views on specific issues, usually in the form of negative attacks on the opposing candidate’s policies.

A Common Cause study determined that the Democrats had spent \$34 million, including \$22 million in soft money, on these ads by August. This Democratic Party funding supplemented the spending of the Clinton re-election campaign, which allowed the presidential campaign to conserve its own resources early and outspend the Dole campaign by millions of dollars in the months just before the party conventions. Not to be outdone, the Republican National Committee came to the aid of the Dole campaign when Dole started to reach the primary campaign spending limit in April of this year. From April through August, the Republicans spent an estimated \$14 million, including \$9 million in soft money, on ads designed to bolster support for Dole.

Yet none of the millions of dollars spent on these ads counted against candidate or party spending limits. Why not? Because they did not advocate the election or defeat of a specific candidate; they did not include the magic words “Vote for President Clinton” or “Elect Bob Dole.” This bidding war between the parties was spurred on by a ruling issued by the Supreme Court in June. In a case involving issue ads paid for by the Colorado Republican Party, the court seemed to suggest that party committees can make unlimited independent expenditures on behalf of their candidates so long as the party does not consult or communicate with a candidate about its activities. Although issue ads look and sound like campaign ads, the court ruled that they were simply exercises in free speech. Within weeks of the court’s ruling, the Republican National Committee set up a separate office that was “independent” of the rest of its election operation and approved more than \$700,000 for independent ads in states with key congressional seats at stake.

The parties and business interests aren’t the only groups taking advantage of the opportunities to flaunt the law. Seeking to return the House of Representatives to Democratic control, the AFL-CIO devoted \$35 million to an “issue-advocacy” campaign aimed at defeating the freshmen Republicans. The National Republican Congressional Com-

mittee embarked on an ad campaign of its own in October, airing ads in 25 cities designed to respond to the AFL-CIO attacks and to defend its 30 most vulnerable members.

This relentless race for cash and the almost exclusive emphasis placed on negative television commercials is exacerbating the deepest problems in our political system. It virtually guarantees that large disparities in the amount of resources available to candidates will continue to exist. Most of the party spending is focused on the battleground states in the presidential race, the 74 seats held by first-term Republican representatives, and the 50 open seats in the House and Senate. As the beneficiaries of millions of dollars in party spending, congressional candidates in these races find their campaign coffers overflowing with funds. By contrast, at least a third of the congressional challengers are so poorly financed that they are unable to mount viable campaigns. Or candidates find that they need to raise more money than ever before in order to compete with the flow of national money pouring into their districts.

A good example of the effects of such spending is the congressional race in Maine's First District. Freshman Republican Jim Longley, who spent less than \$200,000 in winning his seat two years ago, has been targeted by the Democratic Party and its labor allies. Although he raised more than three times as much in 1996 as he did in 1994, he could not begin to match the resources poured into the race against him. His challenger, Democrat Tom Allen, raised over \$725,000 by the end of September. The Democratic Party began advertising against Longley in the spring. The AFL-CIO had spent \$544,000 on ads attacking his record by the third week of September. The League of Conservation Voters spent more than \$60,000 on an ad campaign of its own. As a result of this race and another hotly contested one, voters in the Portland media market were treated to a barrage of an estimated 6,900 political TV ads between April and September, an average of 41 a day. Many of these were sponsored by groups other than the candidates seeking office, including nearly 2,000 commercials paid for by the AFL-CIO.

More importantly, instead of finding new ways to encourage grass-roots volunteer activity and increase voter turnout, the parties are devoting most of their resources to the type of negative advertising that only serves to increase public cynicism and disaffection with politics. These "issue-advocacy" ads are particularly harmful because they reduce the ability of the electorate to hold candidates accountable for what takes place in a campaign. Because these ads are paid for by others and developed independently, candidates who benefit from them can claim that they have nothing to do with them, as Clinton and Dole have done. They therefore do not have to accept responsibility for any attacks aired in an ad; in fact, candidates can claim they are running "positive campaigns" and can leave the dirty work to outside groups.

This open flow of money from political organizations in Washington also threatens to enhance the trend toward a

nationalizing and polarizing of American politics. Because those who pay the piper call the tune, congressional elections are increasingly being waged on the basis of national issues and cookie-cutter ad campaigns that pay little regard to local issues or concerns. While many of these ads raise important issues, such as the level of funding for Medicare, education and the environment, they do so in ways designed to instill fear in the electorate and that shed little light on the difficult choices that must be faced in addressing these issues. The commercials also seek to divide candidates into two groups by characterizing all Republican challengers as Gingrich clones or all Democrats as "liberal spenders" who favor "big government." The message is every district is the same; only the names change.

Fewer people are giving more money to benefit a shrinking group of candidates. This pattern virtually ensures that a few select groups and fat-cat donors will enjoy special access to government officials, while the rest of the public is left to stand by and watch. Already questions are being raised about the legislative favors corporations will seek in exchange for their campaign largesse. In the next Congress, such big donors will no doubt exert an even stronger influence on the direction of public policy. ◀

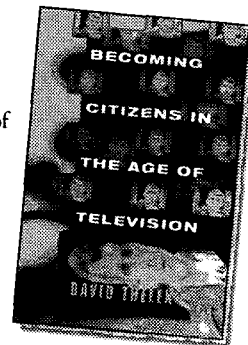
Anthony Corrado is an associate professor of government at Colby College in Waterville, Maine. He is the author of *Paying for Presidents* (Twentieth Century Fund, 1993) and *Financing the 1992 Election* (M.E. Sharpe, 1995).

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DRUG POLICY

Can't kick the habit

The Clinton administration has passed up one chance after another to reform a failed drug policy.

By Eva Bertram and
Kenneth Sharpe

This year's presidential campaign generated three months of sound and fury about the nation's drug problems—but few new ideas or significant policy proposals. Bob Dole thrust the drug issue onto the agenda in the final months of the campaign by blaming increased teen drug use on President Clinton's "liberal wink-and-nod policies." He hammered Clinton for being soft on drugs and advocated tough talk—and tough action: "Cut off the supply. ... Stop it at those borders. ... Use the capabilities of our armed forces ... [and National] Guard units ... to help local law enforcement." But at root, Dole used the drug issue in the same way candidates have always used it—to serve largely symbolic purposes that have little to do with the real problems of drug abuse and addiction.

The Dole campaign was foundering before the

Republican convention in August. The lifeline seized by the campaign was a massive tax-cut plan, but Dole strategists wanted a "moral issue" to accompany the economic message. Drugs fit the bill: No significant constituency opposes a get-tough stance on drugs, and the connection between drugs and crime in popular thinking has long made drugs a sure-fire issue for Republicans seeking to paint Democrats as liberal and "soft" on crime. Drugs also provided a way to seize the character issue. A president who joked about "inhaling" on MTV and permitted former drug users to hold positions in the White House fit the image of Bill Clinton that Republican conservatives sought to create: lax, liberal, irresponsible, a child of the '60s, an anti-Vietnam War radical.

Clinton's response was to out-tough Dole. He defended his right flank early in the year by appointing a highly decorated general, Barry McCaffrey, as drug czar. As the election neared, he pushed expanded drug law enforcement budgets through Congress—

emphasizing increased funds for drug interdiction. In September, Clinton announced his intention to provide \$112 million worth of training and new military equipment to Colombia, Venezuela, Peru, Mexico and Caribbean countries to fight the drug war. On the campaign trail and in the televised debates, he bragged about signing tough crime measures, proudly pointing to new death penalties for "drug kingpins" among others.

The campaign's protracted non-debate on drugs was no surprise: Democratic and Republican candidates have sought to out-tough rather than debate each other on the issue since Richard Nixon's law-and-order assault on Hubert Humphrey in 1968. Now that the 1996 election is behind us, what is the likelihood of a serious national dialogue on drug policy?

A growing number of policy-makers have concluded that the drug war backed by both Republicans and Democrats over the past 15 years has failed to address drug abuse and addiction in the United States. This failure is not due to inadequate resources or effort—as some argue—but is rooted in the current strategy's misguided reliance on force and coercion to suppress the drug supply and punish drug users.

While they share a rejection of the drug war status quo, reformers do not agree about the shape drug policy should take. Legalization advocates suggest that nothing short of decriminalizing drug use and making the sale of drugs legal would constitute serious reform. Public health advocates would place concern for health, not crime, at the center of drug policy. Other reformers see serious steps toward reducing the harms caused by both drugs and drug policy (often referred to as harm-minimization or harm-reduction strategies) as the appropriate path. The most modest reform agen-

da would simply allocate more funds to existing treatment and prevention programs, leaving supply-reduction policies intact. Although not mutually exclusive (and in many cases complementary), these roads to reform imply different starting points for debate and strategies for action. But how likely are any of them to be taken seriously?

The best indicator of the prospects for reform of any kind under a second Clinton administration is the record of his first term. That record offers little reason to expect a fundamental rethinking of the ends and means of drug control. The government will not give a serious hearing to proposals

report by the Centers for Disease Control confirming earlier findings that needle-exchange programs are effective in arresting the spread of the AIDS virus. Top officials knew that federal support for needle distribution could save tens of thousands of lives and millions of dollars—but they also knew it would trigger a political firestorm. When the report was leaked to the press in 1995, the administration chose to ignore the findings and continued to refuse to provide even minimal funds for such programs.

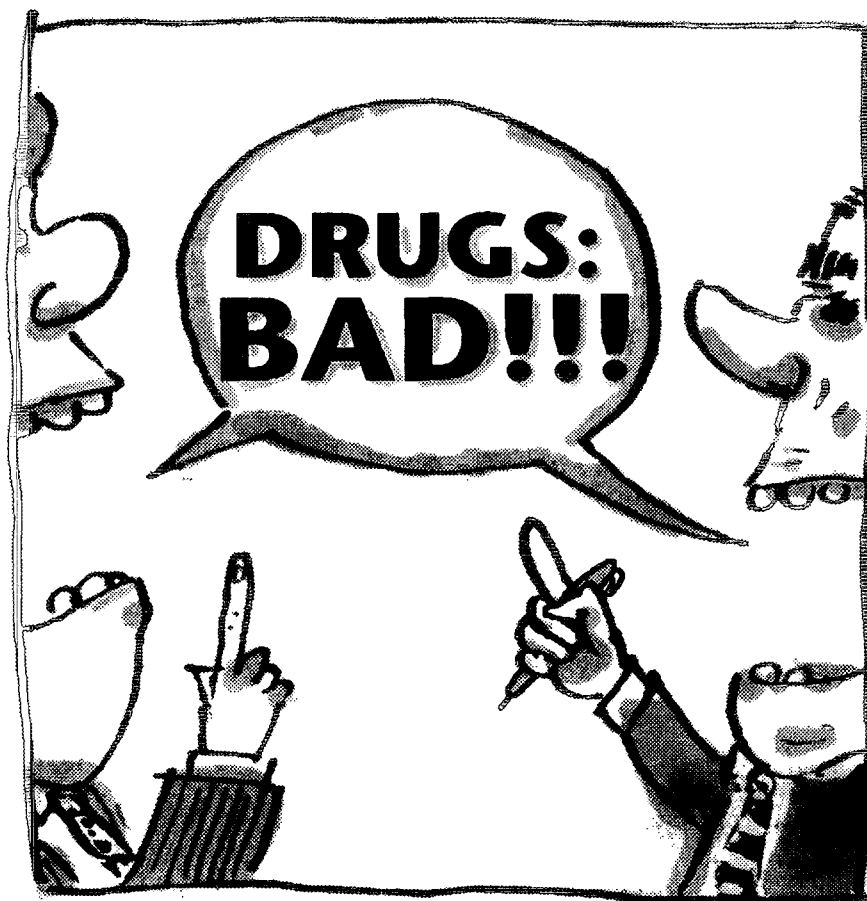
Even the prospects for more modest initiatives, such as expanding treatment programs, are poor. As a candidate in 1992, Clinton fought for treatment on demand. Bush, he said, confuses “being tough with being smart” because he “thinks locking up addicts instead of treating them before they commit crimes ... is clever politics. That may be, but it certainly isn’t sound policy, and the consequences of his cravenness could ruin us.” At the time, Clinton argued for a focus on treatment, asserting that “a president should speak straight even if what he advocates isn’t popular. If he sticks to his guns, the results will prove the wisdom of his policy.”

But once elected, Clinton found he too preferred clever politics to sound policy. After proposing modest but important reforms to promote treatment, he backed away. In 1993, he tried to incorporate a policy of treatment on demand in his doomed health care initiative. In 1994, he launched a major \$355 million treatment initiative for those with serious drug abuse and addiction problems. But with Capitol Hill anxious to cut the deficit, members of Congress were waiting for a clear signal from the president that this was a priority. When no signal came, Congress chipped away at the initiative in order to save other programs. In the end,

Clinton settled for only \$57 million in additional funds for treatment.

Another reform possibility was raised by Attorney General Janet Reno, who ordered a review of mandatory sentences for drug offenders in 1993. She voiced concern that non-violent offenders were often serving mandatory 10- to 15-year sentences, filling up prisons “while we watch dangerous offenders going free.” The review confirmed that 60 percent of inmates in federal prisons were drug offenders, and a third of these were low-level dealers with no record of violence. But when White House officials recognized that they were in for a fight with conservatives on the issue, they tried—unsuccessfully—to suppress the report, and Reno toned down her statements.

It was only when Clinton linked treatment to punishment



for legalizing or regulating the drug supply. The president and his top aides publicly dissociated themselves from the remarks of then-Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders, who in December 1993 raised the possibility that “we would markedly reduce our crime rate if drugs were legalized” and said the impact of the drug war on crime should be studied. This position, among others, led to Elders’ dismissal in December 1994.

Clinton is also unlikely to seriously consider strategies of harm reduction that challenge the punitive, zero-tolerance approach of the current drug war. For four years, the president has refused to allow the use of federal funds to promote the distribution of sterile needles to heroin addicts to reduce the spread of AIDS through intravenous drug use. In 1994, the administration tried to block the release of a

that drug policy reform met with modest success. The 1994 crime bill included provisions for in-prison treatment and for drug courts, which sentence non-violent offenders whose convictions are linked to drug use to treatment instead of prison. Even here, it was hard to get Congress to authorize more than a pittance to finance the programs, and Clinton did not make it a priority to fight for the funding.

Drug treatment programs were an easy target when Republicans took control of Congress. In 1995, they slashed 20 percent from the budget of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Early this year, Congress eliminated Social Security disability insurance for people whose disabilities were alcoholism or drug addiction—cutting them off Medicaid funding for treatment—and Clinton signed the bill.

When Sen. Phil Gramm (R-TX) put forward legislation eliminating all federal benefits for individuals convicted of drug-related felonies, the administration negotiated a “compromise” in which only food stamps and AFDC benefits would be taken away.

Clinton’s failure to fight for reform reflects the administration’s informed assessment that there is little political capital to be gained—and much to be lost—in pursuing even small-scale initiatives. The reasons lie partly in the drug war’s deep roots in American political institutions.

Serious reform means taking on a federal bureaucracy that has grown from a small Treasury Department bureau into a narco-enforcement complex spanning 40 federal agencies and programs and commanding a budget of more than \$8 billion. Each agency has specific missions—seizing drugs, arresting traffickers, intercepting ships and planes, eradicating crops—and generates statistics to demonstrate its success and justify its budget. These numbers are the drug war equivalent of Vietnam-era “body counts.” No agency will admit that these figures are meaningless as measurements of progress toward the stated goals of raising the price and curbing the availability of drugs and reducing drug abuse and addiction. Instead, agency officials correctly insist that to increase seizures or arrests, they need more money—even as the overall policy continues to fail.

Strong congressional support for the drug war makes it more difficult to take on these agencies by cutting budgets, changing missions or shifting funds. To make the case for more money for treatment, for example, Clinton must argue for federal assistance for a needy but unorganized and underrepresented population: drug abusers and addicts. This means risking attack from every quarter: If he funds treatment by raising taxes, he is a “tax and spend” liberal; if he takes money from law enforcement, he is “soft on drugs.”

What makes the fight for drug reform difficult for any president—even one with the political backbone to stand his ground—is that each of these battles must be fought without the support of the electorate. The powerful conventional wisdom that shapes public attitudes on drug policy allows

little room for rethinking a failed drug war strategy.

This conventional wisdom sees drug use as morally wrong and inherently criminal, and concludes that the government should act decisively to stop it with harsh, punitive measures. These ideas are different from the approach of Europeans and others, and they did not always hold sway in the United States. At the turn of the century, Americans could purchase morphine and syringes from the Sears, Roebuck catalogue, and doctors, not law enforcement officials, were in charge of drug control. The punitive approach to drug control emerged out of political struggles that began in the early 1900s, and intensified in the ’60s and ’70s.

Many Americans today harbor harsh and stigmatized images of people with illegal drug problems. If they are poor and African-American, they are dangerous and criminal; if they are middle-class and white, they are morally lax and self-indulgent. In either case, their problems are self-inflicted: They chose to use drugs, the argument goes, so they should accept the consequences. “There’s still almost a moralistic feeling,” explained Dr. Herbert Kleber, a prominent drug official in the Bush administration, “that asks ‘why should we be putting tax dollars into treating something that people have brought upon themselves?’”

A clear double standard is at work. Americans think about people with other drug problems—such as smoking and drinking—very differently, although they too have brought these problems upon themselves. The policy response in these cases is inadequate but points in the right direction: trying to prevent such public health problems through education, taxation, labelling, and regulation of supply and use. And when people fail to avoid abuse or to break an addiction, the response is to encourage them to stop or moderate their use, and to pour millions of dollars into their health care. Despite the largely “self-inflicted” nature of tobacco and alcohol abuse, no one suggests denying chain smokers or heavy drinkers necessary medical care or locking them up to “force” them to stop their drug use.

A few brave policy-makers on Capitol Hill and in the White House continue to argue for making prevention, not law enforcement, our first line of defense, and treatment, not prisons, our second. But the obstacles to reform from above are formidable, particularly in the current conservative climate. The best prospects for meaningful reform lie not in Washington, but in our courthouses, hospitals, social service offices and neighborhoods. It is there that the costs and consequences of a failed and destructive drug war are felt most acutely. And it is among local health and criminal justice officials and local citizens’ groups that the stirrings toward change are most palpable. Until this dissatisfaction coalesces into political pressure, our drug policies are likely to remain incoherent, mean-spirited and ineffective. ◀

Eva Bertram, a Washington policy analyst, and **Kenneth Sharpe**, professor and chair at Swarthmore College’s Political Science Department, are co-authors of *Drug War Politics: The Price of Denial* (University of California Press, 1996).

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B L A C K A M E R I C A

Things fall apart

O

On its first anniversary, the Million Man March appears to have been a monumental missed opportunity.

By Salim Muwakkil

One year after the historic Million Man March, growing numbers of African-Americans are expressing disappointment that black leaders have squandered the event's enormous promise. The march, which was the largest black demonstration in U.S. history, has inspired thousands of smaller triumphs nationwide, but so far black leaders have failed to build the "third political force" that Minister Louis Farrakhan urged during the October 1995 march.

Many observers now blame Farrakhan, who fathered and helped organize the march, for wasting an opportunity to unify black groups across the political spectrum. And though nearly 50,000 came out for the "World's Day of Atonement," a demonstration held last month in front of U.N. headquarters in New York on the anniversary of the Million Man March, the turnout

did little to quell the spreading disenchantment. After all, the articulate leader of the Nation of Islam (NOI) routinely draws crowds in the tens of thousands.

An even smaller crowd turned out in St. Louis in late September for the National Political Convention sponsored by the NOI and the National African American Leadership Summit (NAALS). Although organizers predicted a crowd of 30,000, only 6,000 assembled for Farrakhan's well-publicized keynote address and fewer than 1,000 official delegates registered for the convention. Some of the convention's original organizers, including activists Ronald Waters, Ron Daniels, Maulana Karenga and Conrad Worrell, ultimately decided not to attend.

Many blamed the poor turnout on the stultifying influence of Farrakhan and the Rev. Benjamin F. Chavis, leader of the NAALS. Before he formed the NAALS as an independent organization in 1994, Chavis served as executive director of the NAACP and head of the Commission for Racial Justice of the United Church of Christ, and was highly regarded as an innovative progressive. Since that time, however, he has drawn ever closer to Farrakhan. In fact, many of his former allies now dismiss him as a Farrakhan surrogate.

"After a while, it became clear that the forces of Minister Farrakhan and Ben Chavis wanted a narrow, rather than wide, spectrum represented at the convention," explained Daniels, executive director of the Center for Constitutional Rights and a longtime advocate of independent black politics. "The St. Louis meeting was an illustration of the failure to achieve a collaborative, collective leadership process. The organizers and bankrollers of the convention are comfortable with singular, charismatic leadership styles. But we can't build a black united front with narrow leadership."

Daniels was particularly incensed that organizers invited Lyndon LaRouche to address the convention. Chavis explained that LaRouche was invited because he was the only presidential candidate willing to address the "Black National Agenda" the NAALS had presented to all the candidates. A group of angry delegates, however, prevented the cult leader from speaking. The prospect of LaRouche—who has a long history of opposition to the black liberation movement—addressing a crowd gathered to fight political oppression was an irony too bizarre for even Farrakhan's sycophants to stomach.

Farrakhan's closest supporters outside of the NOI are puzzled by his seeming affection for LaRouche. "I really don't know what could be on the minister's mind," noted one of the Million Man March's primary organizers, who requested anonymity. "He could have discovered how we felt about LaRouche had he consulted with us. But when you're getting divine instructions, I guess you don't have to

consult with mere humans.”

Farrakhan's personal connection to LaRouche is James Bevel, a former associate of the Rev. Martin Luther King who was LaRouche's running mate in the 1992 presidential campaign. Bevel has become increasingly influential within NOI leadership circles (Farrakhan has publicly credited him with inspiring the “atonement” theme of the Million Man March). Farrakhan's embrace of Bevel has provoked serious questions about his political judgment and prompted many other black leaders to retreat from open alliance with him.

Digging an even deeper hole for himself, within months of the march Farrakhan embarked on a 17-nation “friendship tour” across Africa and the Middle East, in which he managed to anger critics of virtually every political stripe. His trips to the Sudan and Nigeria enraged black nationalists who denounce those regimes for authoritarian brutality, and his tour of Iran irritated many black Christians.

“Farrakhan may have made some progressive gestures during his tour, but the overall effect of the trip was to alienate several constituencies,” said Manning Marable, professor of history and director of the Institute for Research in African-American Studies at Columbia University. “The historical stage was set for the reconstruction of an authentic black united front, similar in tone to the National Negro Congress of the Depression years.” Formed in 1936 by A. Philip Randolph, the National Negro Congress was an organization that united black intellectuals and activists explicitly linked to left-leaning labor groups like the newly formed Congress of Industrial Organizations. This time around, Marable remarked, a monumental opportunity was missed. “No progressive black movement can be formed without the participation of the black labor movement. And Chavis has alienated many black trade unionists with his endorsement of NAFTA.” Nor, Marable added, have Chavis or Farrakhan had much experience “building broad coalitions with groups that hold widely divergent beliefs.”

As a result of these failings, the NAALS has been confined to a narrow ideological range, lending credence to charges that the group has become a mere appendage of Farrakhan's NOI. Some of Chavis's former allies ascribe his new closeness to Farrakhan to financial need. After being fired from the NAACP, Chavis had few means of material support, and found a patron in Farrakhan.

Even so, argued James Muhammad, editor of *The Final Call*, the NOI's house organ, most black leaders are reluctant to stand in solidarity with Farrakhan—as Chavis has done—out of fear of what their white sponsors would think. “If our most prominent black leadership could have stood more forthrightly with Minister Farrakhan, they could have been meeting over the last year to chart a course for economic and political progress,” he wrote in *The Final Call*. “But the ‘operational unity’ that our leaders speak of only applies when their white bosses say it's okay.”

Muhammad's taunting rebuke to the black leadership has a ring of truth, if only because no black leader has advanced

a serious alternative to Farrakhan's fatherland nationalism compelling enough to vie for the allegiance of black militants. And considering the history-making success of the Million Man March, not to mention the NOI's ubiquitous ghetto presence, Farrakhan seems unlikely to face a credible challenge any time soon.

Many of Farrakhan's would-be critics prefer to downplay their disagreements for the sake of African-American unity. Despite his essential conservatism, Farrakhan has salvaged some credibility among many leftists by championing certain progressive causes. During his nearly three-hour speech outside of the U.N., for example, Farrakhan denounced the Helms-Burton Act and other instances of U.S. imperialism in Latin America. More importantly, whatever else one might claim about his rhetoric, Farrakhan remains one of the most eloquent critics of the white supremacist status quo, and many regard his emphasis on personal responsibility as a healthy antidote to the cultural nihilism ravaging many black communities. Given the mainstream media's relentless and transparent anti-Farrakhan bias, many black progressives are tempted to side with him if only for the sake of balance.

Nonetheless, the NOI's growing dominance is quite troubling in many respects. For example, many of those with serious criticisms of the NOI's authoritarian methods are reluctant to speak on the record. It's a bit unsettling to hear requests for anonymity from black activists known for their courageous stands on other issues. In some cases, they fear retribution, either physical or rhetorical.

Farrakhan's program also—whether intentionally or not—feeds into the Republican agenda. GOP vice presidential candidate Jack Kemp recently called the Nation of Islam's teaching on black self-determination “wonderful.” The Million Man March, he told the *Boston Globe*, was a “celebration of responsible fatherhood, individual initiative ... and getting an opportunity to be the man that God meant you to be.” Kemp was raked over the coals for these comments in the mainstream media, but it's possible they had the desired effect.

Soon after Kemp's favorable words, Farrakhan told the *Chicago Sun-Times* that he was not encouraging his followers to participate in this year's presidential election. “I really don't see anyone who's in the best interest of our people, or an agenda that is in the best interest of the masses,” he said. “I really don't see any candidate that's worthy of my vote.” It's nearly certain that his many followers and admirers won't find a worthy candidate either. That abstention hurts the Democrats. After spearheading a vigorous voter-registration effort that enlarged the black electorate by tens of thousands, Farrakhan has suddenly folded his electoral tent.

Kemp's remarks and Farrakhan's withdrawal merely amplify progressives' fear that the amiable Black Muslim has hijacked the spirit of the times and hitched it to a reactionary wagon.

E L S A L V A D O R

Beating swords into leg irons

*In postwar
El Salvador,
the prisons
are bursting at
the seams
with the
country's poor.*

By Mario Murillo

Last July, in a sign of how desperate overcrowding in El Salvador's prisons has become, inmates in the Santa Ana Prison in western El Salvador announced a "lottery of death": They would draw lots to be hanged one by one until the government acted decisively to relieve the crowding. Mediation from local human rights groups prevented the macabre protest from taking place, but the overcrowding persists.

On a dreary afternoon in July, the Esperanza Central Penitentiary on the outskirts of San Salvador feels like a pressure cooker. Some prisoners mill around in the warren-like corridors that feed into the central courtyard, but most just stare vacantly at the rain dropping steadily on the ground. Despite the appearance of calm, you can feel the tension that lurks like the thunder behind the thickening rainclouds overhead.

Up to 12 inmates are crammed into cells designed to hold five. The prison's closet-like cells, stacked with bunk beds, are breeding grounds for fights between inmates. The night before, two inmates were stabbed to death in one of the violent confrontations that have become common in El Salvador's prisons in recent years as the population behind bars has exploded.

The euphoria of peace has soured in the four years since the government and the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) signed a U.N.-brokered peace agreement to end the 13-year civil war, in which more than 75,000 people died. That agreement slashed the size of the army, purged the most notorious human rights violators, disbanded the old security forces, and allowed the FMLN to become a legal political party. The dire straits of El Salvador's prisons are one symptom of the country's deepening economic and social crisis: Increasing poverty has fueled a crime wave that is being confronted by a repressive and

ineffectual criminal justice system.

Economic austerity measures have widened the gap between rich and poor. According to government statistics, 60 percent of the population now live below the poverty line, while 30 percent live in conditions of extreme poverty. Steady economic growth over the last four years has meant precious little to the average maquiladora worker, who earns roughly \$4 a day and spends almost all of it just to get to and from work and buy lunch. According to the Foundation for Economic Development, a San Salvador-based think tank, the average worker earns \$120 per month, while a family of four needs \$450 per month to meet its basic needs.

As a result, crime has skyrocketed, especially in the cities. According to a recent survey conducted by the Public Opinion Institute of the Central American University (UCA), more than a quarter of Salvadorans were victims of a crime in the first four months of this year. The majority of these crimes were muggings, purse-snatching and watch-stealing committed in broad daylight.

The government's failure to fully carry out the peace accords has made matters worse. Demobilized guerrillas and soldiers have not been given the economic assistance or training guaranteed them in the accords. Frustration runs high among many former combatants, who find themselves asking, "What was the war for, anyway?" With the war's end, many young Salvadorans have returned home after spending time in the United States to escape the fighting. Among these youths are hundreds of former gang members, primarily from Los Angeles, who have transferred their "turf wars" to the streets of San Salvador.

The abundance of weapons—from M-16s and AK-47

automatic rifles to submachine guns and handguns—in the hands of the general population has made the situation even more volatile. A recent program to exchange weapons for foodstuffs, medicine and other necessities, coordinated by the U.S.-based New York Foundation, netted more than 920 weapons in one week alone.

The conservative government of President Armando Calderón Sol has responded to the crime epidemic with a harsh crackdown. Police and army have fanned out into the streets, arresting suspects at a rate of 2,500 a month. In April, the National Assembly, dominated by the president's ARENA Party, passed emergency anti-crime legislation that limits the rights of citizens, particularly the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty and the right to be tried by a jury. The law increases the maximum sentences for more than 20 different types of crimes, including assault, armed robbery and rape. It prohibits conditional release of first-time offenders, and limits the possibilities of probation. The law treats young people aged 14 to 18 as adults, a provision some Salvadoran judges consider unconstitutional.

In his April report to the U.N. General Assembly, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said the emergency anti-crime legislation "contradicts, in some instances, basic human rights and due process standards [and] may exacerbate the already explosive situation of overcrowding in Salvadoran prisons." Nevertheless, Salvadorans from all social classes, tired of living with fear, have been generally supportive. The UCA survey revealed that over 83 percent felt the new law was necessary to fight crime.

Salvadoran human rights organizations, the FMLN and the progressive wing of the Catholic Church are wary of giving so much authority to the National Civilian Police, the police force created to replace the National Police of the war years. For Salvadorans, the memory of a repressive state apparatus and its paramilitary death squad allies is still fresh. Opponents of the anti-crime law are afraid that the new police force will commit atrocities against the civilian population in the name of fighting crime.

Such fears are not groundless. The death squads have already begun to rear their ugly heads again. This time, the targets are not political dissidents, but the poor, primarily young delinquents. "Last year, we buried more than a dozen children," says Ricardo Quiñones, the executive director of the Olaf Palme Foundation, a non-governmental organization that defends the rights of youth. "Seven of them had clear marks of being systematically murdered. These crimes occurred in the center of the city, in broad daylight, in front of hundreds of witnesses."

Many charge that the National Civilian Police is directly involved in the violence, and linked to organized crime and narcotrafficking as well. The Olaf Palme Foundation has documented several cases where police officers played a role in the summary executions of street children. In one case, a police car dragged a deaf 10-year-old boy along the street after he robbed somebody on a city bus. Not one of

these cases has been prosecuted to date.

The Salvadoran Department of Prisoners Awaiting Conviction, an arm of the state corrections office, describes the emergency anti-crime legislation as a time bomb waiting to explode. Those arrested in the recent sweeps have been dumped in prisons that were already bursting at the seams. While the country's 16 penitentiaries were built to hold a maximum of 3,500 inmates, they were holding close to 9,000 prisoners in August according to the Department of Statistics of Penal Centers. Sanitary conditions in the prisons are appalling, and the food is unhealthy. Nor can the court system keep up with the burgeoning caseload. Two out of every three prisoners have yet to be tried.

For the ARENA government, the solution is more punitive measures and bigger prisons. Building on the popular support for the anti-crime law, the government recently began to push for the enactment of the death penalty. Earlier this year, the Ministry of Education suggested converting some of the country's schools into detention centers. One Christian Democratic Party assemblyman, Arturo Argumedo, called for the privatization of prisons. He suggested using inmates as a source of cheap labor, sort of a quasi-penal *maquiladora*. So far, however, none of these proposals have been implemented.

The FMLN, now the country's main opposition party, is calling for a completely different approach. "Basically, people who go to jail here leave with a doctorate in criminality," says Salvador Sánchez Cerén, the FMLN's general coordinator. "The prisons are not centers of rehabilitation, as they are meant to be under our constitution."

The party argues that the problem of crime and punishment in El Salvador is a direct reflection of the faulty structure of the new police force and the failure of the peace accords to reform the judicial system. Sánchez Cerén blames the U.N. Mission in El Salvador for leaving the country prematurely before adequate structures to deal with crime and justice were established.

The FMLN would repeal the anti-crime law. In its place, party leaders have suggested a number of measures: Those arrested for certain kinds of crimes should be detained at home, at least while their cases are being processed. Funding for the judiciary should be increased in order to process the huge backlog of cases. And the National Civilian Police should be subject to a thorough housecleaning.

Despite their support for tougher measures to deal with crime, few Salvadorans are ignorant of the real sources of the country's crime wave. The FMLN speaks for many when it argues that the explosion of crime stems less from the complexities of the postwar adjustment process than from the economic hardships facing the majority of Salvadorans. Until the powers that be in El Salvador squarely confront that reality, crime will continue to spiral out of control. ◀

Mario Murillo is the director of public affairs programming at WBAI, New York's Pacifica radio affiliate.

I N T H E A R T S

Shakespeare for dummies

A

**Looking for
Richard makes
Richard III
accessible to
contemporary
audiences
without
bowdlerizing
the Bard.**

By Linda DeLibero

quiz: What was the last film adaptation of Shakespeare that didn't assume the audience was full of high school dropouts and bored malcontents looking for a thrill? By my reckoning, I'd say you'd have to go back to 1971, when Roman Polanski's *Macbeth* proved that you could deliver the Bard straight and still give the audience a rip-roaring time. Granted, there was lots of blood and a naked Lady Macbeth, but Polanski chose neither to strip down the language nor tart up the production in contemporary garb. Today, in the era of Branagh and Shakespeare lite, such a feat would be near impossible. Instead, we get the new adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*, which has the young lovers writhing to "When Doves Cry." The only question is who's gotten dumber—the audience or the producers?

In such an atmosphere, you have to give Al Pacino credit for tackling the problem head-on. *Looking for Richard* neatly answers the problem of dumbed-down Shakespeare by finding the people who think that's what they want and convincing them otherwise. The film takes the form of a documentary, intertwining scenes from an imaginary production of *Richard III* with interviews, explication and scenes of the actors rehearsing. Wandering the streets of New York like a demented, slightly overgrown college boy (please, Al, lose the backward baseball cap), Pacino polls the hoi polloi and learns that, as one young lady demurely puts it, Shakespeare "sucks." But unlike his contemporaries, Pacino still wants to give us the real thing—he just figures he needs to do a little educating first. And you know what? It works. I can't promise that confirmed Bard-loathers will be turned on by *Looking for Richard*, but there's enough here to keep them in the theater. And for those who already love Shakespeare (I assume there are still a few out there), the only frustration is wanting more of the play, since, from what

we see of it, the production is quite promising.

Not that Pacino hasn't made some concessions to Hollywood. A primary conceit of *Looking for Richard* is that it's Americans who don't like Shakespeare, so the play within the film is pointedly cast with American actors (read: stars) in the big parts. This is fine when it comes to Kevin Spacey, who makes a suitably nasty Buckingham, or Estelle Parsons, whose Queen Margaret is delightfully loony. But it's not so fine for the underripe Winona Ryder—as Lady Anne—who was obviously cast to pull in a younger audience. After witnessing that performance, one can only be grateful that Pacino somehow managed to keep Keanu Reeves out of the project.

Another problem is Pacino himself, or rather, Pacino as himself. Pacino is breathtakingly good when he stops caring what the audience thinks of him, and nearly impossible to watch when he just wants to be loved. For example, it's difficult to think of a more chilling portrayal of evil than Pacino's Michael Corleone in *Godfather II*; it's equally hard to think of a more ruinous performance than his reprise of the role in *Godfather III*, which turned Michael into a warm-hearted softy. That schizophrenic impulse is fully on display in *Looking for*



Looking for Richard
Directed by Al Pacino

PHOTOS © 1993 TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX



Richard, where Pacino intercuts his beautifully creepy turn as Gloucester with shots of himself (with the baseball cap) mugging for the camera.

Al Pacino as Gloucester in
Looking for Richard.

Yet for all his posturing, Pacino does something amazingly generous in *Looking for Richard* which delivers fresh insights into Shakespeare's play. *Richard III* has always been a one-man vehicle, the secondary roles so overwhelmed by Gloucester's wicked machinations that you barely remember they're there. Even luminaries like Ralph Richardson and John Gielgud got left in the shade by Oliver's famous turn as the son of York. But in *Looking for Richard*, Pacino films his actors ruminating over their parts, hashing out interpretations, giving full measure to each character's motives. He lets them have star turns in a series of set pieces—Clarence's (Alec Baldwin) conscience-pricking speech to his executioners, Elizabeth's (Penelope Allen) wrathful grief, Buckingham's ambivalent treachery—that illuminate both their own characters' complexity and Richard's. Seldom have the nuances of these roles been granted such careful attention.

Of course, Pacino has the advantage that he can focus exclusively on the play's big moments, happily sidestepping the question that has always bedeviled producers of *Richard III*: what to do with all those superfluous characters and endless lamentation scenes. In addition, Pacino calls upon a

host of experts—from Shakespearean scholars to thespians like Derek Jacobi—to parse the meaning of the play, right down to a thorough explication of iambic pentameter. While these insights are occasionally banal, the film is peppered with so many that some, at least, can't help but be useful.

Curiously, the missing piece in this welter of information is Pacino's own history in the role of Richard. He played him twice on the stage in the '70s, the second time as a scrawny street punk in a black beret (apparently Pacino has a thing for silly hats), a production that waspish critic John Simon pronounced uniformly dreadful. But this Richard is a much older man, and the stogy mannerisms (in the play at least) are gone. Pacino has evolved into an effectively sinister Richard, and he's helped by the fact that his big scenes are shot mostly in close-up, where his diminutive size doesn't detract from the monstrous proportions of the role. It would be nice to hear how he got from there to here, and how time has changed his perception of the play.

Nonetheless, *Looking for Richard* is, for the most part, an intriguing exploration of the question that will likely haunt Shakespeare admirers for as long as the plays are produced: How do you make the poet speak to contemporary audiences without losing him altogether? Pacino's film provides no definitive answers, but it sure has a good time trying. And I'll venture that it's a damn sight truer to the Bard's vision than anything else we'll be seeing on the big screen soon.

IN PRINT

Peddling the past

By Chris Lehmann

David Lowenthal, a dogged student of students of the past, argued in his last book on history and historiography that the past is a foreign country. That thesis gets dismayingly updated in his new book: *Possessed by the Past* documents the various ways the past has become a tourist colony, a sort of fun-house reflection of the present, purged of any abiding controversy and conflict and stocked with carefully selected baubles bespeaking a shiny, warmly tribal authenticity.

The heritage industry in its many guises—privatized stately homes, revisionist textbooks and feverishly ramifying genealogy, to name just a few of the more obvious examples—has captured the imaginations of earnest middlebrow enthusiasts the world over. It's hard to leave the house, let alone go on vacation, without encountering the overstuffed legacies of heritage practitioners: exoticized ethnic artifacts and folklores, period theme parks and museums, the brisk auctioneering trade in the heirlooms of families and nations. It's an enterprise that offers a suggestive vantage on our own age's drastically foreshortened hindsight and obdurate penchant for ignoring—and, indeed, gilding over—the rougher edges of historical memory, human nature and

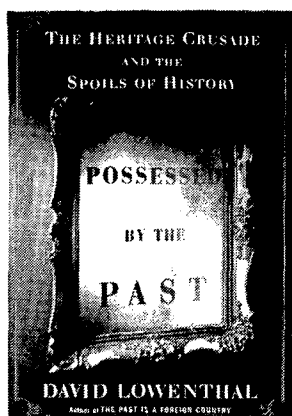
civilizational mortality.

When translated into the present, heritage yields a politics of glib, obsessive contemporaneity, in which the past serves (at best) as a warmed-over version of Bedford Falls in *It's a Wonderful Life*: the burnished, sepia-toned foil to the vast, debauched Pottersville we inhabit today. Consider the luminous bout of nostalgia that prompted Bob Dole to offer his back as a bridge to the past—the unseemly image that started President Clinton and the Democrats on their own blathering “bridge to the 21st century” binge, and left millions of citizens wondering if the whole campaign would not be best described as the beast with two backs. Dole sought to invoke the classic, cozy shibboleths that are the stock in trade of the heritage business—the America in which quaint small-town comity was the order of the day. No one locked their doors, you could take your gal out sparkin' to a soda fountain, and Jeffrey Dahmer wasn't even a gleam in his daddy's eye.

Dole's imaginings prompted an equally predictable flurry of indignant scoldings from the liberal left: The past was squalid and brutal exploitation, racism and sexism, punctuated by world-historic bloodbaths. In all this shrill nostalgia and anti-nostalgia, there is hardly a trace of a lived past—that foreign land where people puzzled out the contradictions of their lives by actually living them, in which you could fight for the eight-hour day or campaign against lynching, but still be a dysfunctional parent or spouse. As long as the past's inhabitants remain the quarry of our own perfervid reveries, they are lost in a way even more final than they are by virtue of their own deaths.

But such careful erasure is the stuff on which the heritage impulse feeds, and as Lowenthal copiously documents, the heritage impulse is everywhere. Indeed, *Possessed by the Past* is as thorough a typology of heritage endeavors as any reader could want, rehearsing the disputes arising from personal bequests and legacies alongside the efforts of nations to cling to discredited mythologies of origin simply because they are old. Along the way, readers glean some edifying and horrifying examples of the unintended consequences of lionizing a mythical past. Consider the British colony of Barbuda, which was once the subject of much speculation that it was being developed as a slave-breeding grounds. The island's rumored slave “nursery” never existed, but the descendants of Barbudan slaves wound up taking a retrospective pride in it anyway: “Selective breeding during slavery, visitors are still repeatedly told, made Barbudans taller, stronger, and more handsome than other West Indians. ... Rather than a shaming saga to be shed with alacrity, the stud-farm past remains a triumphal founding fable—trotted out just now to explain why Princess Diana feels at home in Barbuda ‘surrounded by beautiful people.’ ”

The book is, in fact, a compendium of such detail. Lowenthal adduces case studies not just from British heritage, but from the shrines, monuments, antiques and legends of America, France, Australia, Germany and Japan (just to note the most frequent). And that, finally, is the



Possessed by the Past:
The Heritage Crusade
and the Spoils of History
By David Lowenthal
The Free Press
338 pp., \$25



problem: So immersed does Lowenthal seem in the heritage business that he reproduces it, making his book a storehouse of anecdotes about the plundering of the past without providing any real context in which to view the whole bewildering enterprise. Early on, he asserts of the heritage boom that "no explanation specific to one people can account for a trend so contagious. What is involved is a cluster of trends whose premises, promises and problems are truly global." He then provides a familiar litany of the ech-modern anomie that sends people preening into privatized pasts: the rapid pace of social change, a gnawing sense of individual rootlessness, the attachment to legacies of genocides, the media.

Of course it's not that such asseverations aren't true: They're *truisms*, unsuited to the task of historical explanation, which seeks precisely to develop accounts of the past "specific to one people" or place. More to the point, Lowenthal's grab-bag modernity omits perhaps the most obvious source of the heritage craze: the capitalist market. After all, the notion that history can be made one's very own, whether in the form of keepsakes and gewgaws or family trees, is a conceit hatched directly out of the ever-

widening sovereignty of the consuming self. Annexing glamorous ancestors or idealized archaic cultures to one's repertoire of reference points is largely the spiritual and historical equivalent of a shopping binge.

Likewise, it's the market that is responsible for the foreshortening of historical memory that is the precondition of the heritage biz. Couldn't it be that the past gets divided into bite-sized, interchangeable pieces simply in order to make it saleable? For example, the signature division of the past into handily-labeled decades—the Conformist '50s, the Turbulent '60s, the Avaricious '80s—is a recent innovation of mass journalism, not the expression of some perennial, universal attitude towards history. Moreover, the market's various remasterings of the past have leached visibly into the repertoires of culture workers, so that even in the academy it has become increasingly difficult to approach history as anything but a procession of signifying icons, from the Brooklyn Bridge to Madonna.

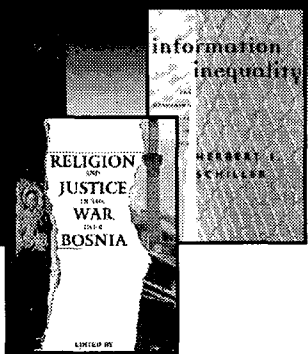
But instead of examining the social forces behind the remorseless commodification of the past, Lowenthal dwells on the various distinctions between heritage and profession-

al history. The divergences—and parallels—he unearths are unsurprising: Since all accounts of the past are necessarily partial and biased, historians can't pretend to combat the heritage industry with the trumped-up mystique of objectivity; both history and heritage are guided by historical assumptions. Such observations are truisms delivered with a strangely breathless air of hard-won insight. (In fact, all of this territory was covered, with similarly numbing detail and portentousness, in Peter Novick's 1988 tome *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession*.) Lowenthal evidently believes that, even in our jaded post-positivist age, historians enjoy much more esteem as truth-tellers than the evidence would suggest. It's as though the last decade and a half's cognitive assault on the idea and experience of historical continuity—which has besieged both pop culture and the postmodern academy—had simply never happened.

Moreover, in his focus on competing methods, Lowenthal overlooks a far more obvious and fundamental distinction between heritage and history: the raw materials each works with. Heritage fetishizes the intimate, the personal and the banal—the reassuring talismans that remind us that the past was occupied by folks much like us. History seeks to engage public questions: Even the “from the bottom up” social history that emerged in the '70s at least tried to record ordinary lives roiled by social changes—labor struggles, emancipation, secularization and the like—significant enough to deserve the appellation “historic.”

There are, in other words, no historical conflicts in heritage. The cozy ancestors populating the heritage trade—exponents either of bygone glamour and power or of unsullied, sainted oppression—perfectly complement the imperatives of a politics that rarely ascends beyond the brayings and pantings of the imperial self.

Comprehending the past is not really a question of making it “usable” for the present (to paraphrase the famed pronouncement of literary critic Van Wyck Brooks). We are not so much destined to “use” the past as we are fated to be used by it. It's worth pondering Brooks' own fate in this regard; the literary radical of the early 20th century who hailed America's coming of age suffered what amounted to a five-year nervous collapse and spent his later years writing sunny paeans to the bygone golden age of New England literature. From historical iconoclast to heritage tender—it's an oddly fitting decline for an overexuberant modernist, and one that much of our culture has traversed since. Unfortunately, since Lowenthal has so little to say about this trajectory—or about any of the affective attachments to the past that make up what might be called the demand side of the heritage impulse—his book is little help in guessing at the reasons a once boundless confidence in surmounting and controlling the course of history has shriveled into nostalgia and antiquarianism. Richly researched though it is, *Possessed by the Past* reminds us that those who do not learn from history are condemned to repeat themselves. ◀



ROUTLEDGE

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The art of sleaze

By Ken Silverstein

Before being elected to Congress in 1978, Newt Gingrich was a professor of history at West Georgia College, earning \$15,400 a year. Newt wasn't much of an academic—he didn't publish anything and never bothered to apply for tenure—but it appears that West Georgia is where the future House Speaker first honed the fundraising techniques that he later refined in Washington, specifically extracting money from people who needed his help. In an episode that neatly foreshadows his years in government, Gingrich on one occasion suggested that students should give \$5 to his campaign for Congress as a display of "good government."

This story from Newt's college days is but one of many nuggets found in John K. Wilson's *Newt Gingrich: Capitol Crimes and Misdemeanors*. With Gingrich's popularity ratings at an all-time low and the Speaker of the House under investigation by a congressional ethics committee, Wilson's book is a timely offering. Unfortunately, it bogs down badly because the author insists on painting Newt as the root of all political evil.

The first four chapters of *Capitol Crimes and Misdemeanors*, in which Wilson chronicles Newt's long history as a bagman for Corporate America, are the book's strongest. Even people who have closely tracked Gingrich's rise to power will learn of brazen displays of influence peddling with which they were previously unfamiliar.

I'd never heard the tale of Newt's intimate relationship with Kansas City real estate developer Miller Nichols, who in the early '90s sent a series of letters to Gingrich complaining about federal rules on asbestos. Apparently Nichols owned many old buildings constructed with asbestos, and the federal requirement to remove it was causing him "a great deal of financial distress." "It may be that I will call you for an appointment to come back to Washington to discuss this issue," Nichols wrote in a January 19, 1990 missive. "It is costing my company millions and millions of dollars to comply with federal regulations."

Newt was eager to assist his pen pal, perhaps because Nichols in one letter had prudently listed a full record of his political contributions to Gingrich, which came to \$59,000.

On the day after he received Nichols' plea, Gingrich wrote back: "Your continued support ... is very important to me! I want you to know how very much I appreciate your generous contribution!"

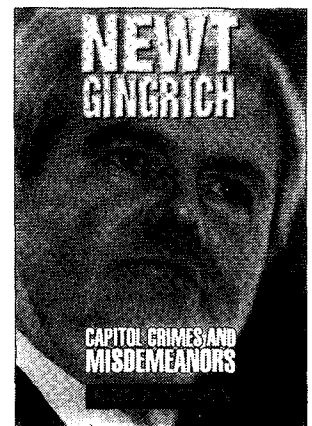
Gingrich quickly began pressing Nichols' cause in Washington. In an April letter to the EPA's William Reilly, Gingrich said that he was concerned "over the crisis that is arising in our courts from asbestos litigation. ... I would appreciate any help you can lend on this matter." Now that's constituent service!

Wilson also describes how GOPAC, Newt's political action committee, boldly turned the quid pro quo into its standard operating procedure. In one fundraising pitch, Chairman Bo Callaway told potential donors that GOPAC was "unique" because it gave "the opportunity for our Charter Members to work with Newt Gingrich and to influence his issues and direction."

GOPAC staffers knew that their tactics were stretching the law to the breaking point and beyond. A memo to Gingrich written in 1990 said forthrightly, "Remember what Ollie North said: 'Mr. President, you don't want to know about this.' We are protecting you, Newt." After reading through the catalogue of horrors Wilson has assembled, it's difficult to understand, even in this jaded age, how Gingrich has thus far escaped censure by the Federal Election Commission or by congressional ethics committees.

Unfortunately, *Capitol Crimes and Misdemeanors* goes mostly downhill after its first 75 pages. To fill the remaining two-thirds of the book, Wilson rehashes every rotten policy that's come out of Washington during the past few years and lays the blame at the doorstep of Newt and the Republican Party.

This leads to uninteresting chapters about Newt's "betrayal" of environmentalism, his support for the military-industrial complex, his homophobia ("Gingrich has an ugly history of anti-gay remarks and votes"), and his "draconian" welfare policies, which "will cause deepening poverty and foster social indifference." These are bracketed by section headings that, after a while, become almost comical: "Lies, Lies, and ... Higher Learning"; "Rhetoric to Shock Even George Orwell"; "Lying About Deficits"; "Lying With Statistics"; "The Thirst for Power"; "The Arrogance of Power"; "Lies, Damn Lies—and Accounting." Very little in these chapters will come as a surprise to anyone even



Newt Gingrich: *Capitol Crimes and Misdemeanors*
By John K. Wilson
Common Courage Press
248 pp., \$24.95

remotely familiar with Gingrich or current politics.

More important, *Capitol Crimes and Misdemeanors* is extremely generous in its treatment of the Democrats, with the result that the book often reads as if it had been commissioned by the Democratic National Committee. Thus, Wilson reduces the S&L crisis to being "primarily a Republican scandal" and caricatures the current anti-environmental movement as "a Republican crusade, financially supported by big business." Of course, Democrats were deeply involved in the S&L scandal and the party's current eco-policies are barely distinguishable from the GOP's.

Even more egregious is Wilson's treatment of the push for welfare "reform," which he lays at the feet of those big, bad Republicans. In Wilson's account, the anti-welfare crusade is a plot "to benefit the corporations and the wealthy business leaders who bankrolled Gingrich's rise to power." Newt himself "sees nothing wrong with letting children starve and watching people go without food." Later, Wilson makes the remarkable claim that the Contract with America has had only minimal impact because of "the presence of Bill Clinton in the White House, vetoing budget plans that would decimate social programs."

Even the most rabid foe of Gingrich should be able to recognize this as a grossly simplistic and misleading analysis. Since the book was written, of course, the view of Bill Clinton as defender of social programs has been proved disastrously wrong by his decision to sign Republican legislation that his own staff told him would push an additional one million children into poverty. But even in 1992, Clinton made "end welfare as we know it" the mantra of his presidential campaign (Wilson erroneously attributes this slogan to the GOP), and he subsequently backed a welfare "reform" bill only slightly less cruel than the version favored by Gingrich.

Wilson even achieves the astonishing feat of turning Clinton into a crusader for campaign finance reform. He writes: "Although Gingrich promised in a June 1995 New Hampshire meeting with President Clinton to pursue campaign finance reform, he kept putting off the issue. Clinton marveled at how Gingrich broke his pledge to create a bipartisan commission on campaign financing and lobbying. 'When you shake hands with somebody in broad daylight and say you're going to do something, you ought to at least act like you're going to do it.'"

The last time I checked, Clinton, whose entire political

career has been financed by corporate fat cats, wasn't acting like he was too interested in campaign finance, either. The Democrats expect to raise \$120 million or more this year in soft-money contributions, and their convention in Chicago was paid for by companies like AMOCO, Archer Daniels Midland, J.P. Morgan, Lockheed Martin, Tenneco and WMX. It recently became known that Clinton, in his unceasing bid to fill Democratic Party coffers, even dispatched Vice President Al Gore to California to pass the hat at a Buddhist temple.

Finally, in seeking to demonstrate that the press has been harder on Clinton than on Gingrich—a highly debatable proposition—Wilson offers up a shameful whitewash of the Whitewater affair. "Hillary Clinton's infamous \$1,000 [commodity trade] investment that turned into \$100,000 was an aboveboard investment in which the Clintons risked far more than \$1,000 because they were liable for any losses," he writes. "The Clintons were given the opportunity to take another risk by investing in Whitewater; the fact that the Whitewater investment was not a payoff is proven by the Clintons' financial losses on the deal."

Hillary's "aboveboard" investment was handled by Jim Blair of Tyson Foods, a big political donor to her husband. Hillary's account at one moment was \$117,500 short, at which point a call would have wiped her and Bill out. The call, for obvious reasons, never came.

As to Whitewater itself, the Clintons had been eyeing the cookie jar with eager anticipation. "If Reaganomics works at all," Hillary wrote to James McDougal in 1981, "Whitewater could become the Western Hemisphere's Mecca." Failure to realize the anticipated profit is hardly absolution. It's as if a robber pleaded for mercy from the court because he'd made off with only \$100, less than the amount he'd spent on safecracking tools, car rentals and weapons.

Gingrich may have turned influence peddling into an art form—and for that he deserves special attention—but there are plenty of other Newts running around Congress, Democrats as well as Republicans, who eagerly trade favors for campaign donations. *Capitol Crimes and Misdemeanors* will provide some visceral satisfaction for Newt-haters but its broader message—that the nation's ills can all be traced to suburban Georgia—is badly flawed. ◀

Ken Silverstein is co-editor of *CounterPunch*, a political newsletter based in Washington.



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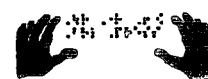
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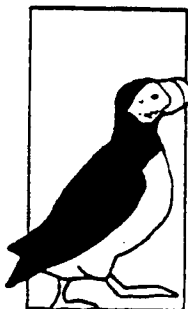
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Continued from page 40

story of the children Andy and Sid teaches us to be proper Consumers; the story of the toys Woody and Buzz, proper Workers (or, to use Disney-speak, "Cast Members").

The movie begins in the room of Andy, by all appearances an isolated little boy. He's unable to muster up human friends unless he's having a birthday party, his faceless mother is too busy to do much besides shower him with toys and ferry him to theme restaurants, and his father seems to be non-existent. Andy spends a lot of time with his toys.

For their part, the toys constitute Andy's harem, catering to his every need without troubling him with their lives: They flop into lifeless silence whenever he appears, to be used unprotestingly as he pleases. Even though they're inanimate objects to Andy, the toys actively manage the toy room, organizing themselves according to "team" principles. Woody the Cowboy, highest-ranked according to "play time" and therefore manager, leads not by giving direct orders, but by addressing the other toys' desperate need to provide quality service.

It's the Disney world writ small: consumers so isolated from other humans they're willing to pay for ersatz social lives, and workers so selfless they willingly reduce themselves to objects for others' consumption. This happy arrangement is threatened, however, by the coming Third Wave. The plot of *Toy Story* begins with the two archetypal events of the new Global Economy: relocation (as Andy's family prepares to move to a new house) and the threat of human obsolescence.

Woody, having instructed the lower toys to be stoical about their "replacement" by more competitive toys, suddenly finds that he is outdated himself. Buzz Lightyear, Andy's new birthday gift, is a Space Ranger arrayed with gadgetry, including a push-button voice that outdazzles Woody's simple pullstring; his unscrewable arm reveals a robotic nature that contrasts with Woody's cloth-and-stuffing flesh. Woody, a cowboy, is the archetypal human nakedly confronting nature; Buzz the astronaut is encased in technology. Soon Andy starts paying more attention to Buzz, leaving Woody in the toy chest. In a fit of Luddism, Woody pushes the Space Ranger out the window, leaving both stranded "outside."

So there's a downside to the revolution: Even managers can lose their jobs (and dirty tricks that sidestep honest competition will only backfire). But Disney shows the way out: Woody has to learn not to fight Buzz, but to work with him. Their joint journey of punishment and redemption, as they try to make it back to the toy room through the wastelands of suburbia, ends in a partnership of management and technology. In the final crisis, in which the two race to overtake the vehicles taking Andy's family to a new house, the subordinate toys are no help at all. But when Woody applies raw ingenuity (and a bottle rocket) to Buzz's technology, the two of them literally soar above the clouds. It's only the lower ranks who are obsolete, after all.

The other climax of the movie resolves the Sid and Andy parable. Sid, the kid next door, is the embodiment of evil. In

the Disney lexicon, he is the Bad Consumer, too much the content-provider of his own imagination. (Andy, on the other hand, rarely puts words into Woody's or Buzz's mouth that aren't part of their pre-recorded repertoire.) Sid's cardinal sin is disrespect for intellectual property: He breaks trademarked toys apart and rearranges them into personal creations (or simply uses them as fodder for explosives). Moreover, he finds or steals toys rather than acquiring them through authorized channels.

Sid's punishment is the revelation that the toys are alive—they *hate* him, and are policing his every move. Toys, who speak directly into the camera, command Sid to "play nice" and tell him that "we are watching you." The threatening message to youngsters is as strong as the wish-fulfillment fantasy: The technology that suckles also surveils.

Sid, in any case, is left miles behind by the end of the movie. Paradise is regained in a presumably more upscale suburb. All of the toys have made it to the new toy room; the specter of replacement has vanished. How? Apparently by both the Consumer and the Cast working harder: Andy has increased his play-effort to accommodate both Woody and Buzz.

So, if we want to enjoy the Global Party of the next century, our roles are clear. We have to be Good Workers, self-negating and open to continuous change; and we have to be Good Consumers, properly paying for the content of our lives. If we obey these simple precepts, come what may, we will thrive.

Or will we? If the medium of *Toy Story* is the message, we're in trouble. The animation was subcontracted to Pixar Studios, whose computer techniques caused, in the words of the president of the animators' union, "a little bit of nervousness that happens with every revolution." The revolution was mainly a labor-cutting one. According to *Entertainment Weekly*, "*The Lion King* ran to \$45 million and employed 810 animators, compared with *Toy Story*'s \$30 million budget and staff of 100." To save 30 percent in costs, human labor was cut by almost 80 percent. Disney obviously expects a windfall when the costs of the technology plummet; it's hard to say how much solace out-of-work animators will find in Disney's swelling profit margins.

And what about us, the hard-working consumers? Despite movie critics' falling over themselves to proclaim *Toy Story*'s animation "eye-popping," "dazzling," and "revolutionary," it frankly sucks. Facial expressions and body movements require the irregular quirkiness of the human hand, not mathematical shortcuts. Next to other Disney films—with their subtle colors, stylized caricatures, and hyper-expressive faces—*Toy Story* comes across as pallid claymation.

Decrying the mode of *Toy Story*'s production, though, may get you kicked out of Dis-topia. Instead, we must attend closely to the movie's instructions:

Work hard. Play hard. And leave the rest to Mickey Mouse.

Matt Roth is a freelance writer based in Chicago.

THE TOYS ARE US!

By Matt Roth

We can't be more than a couple of decades away from a time when Disney, Inc.—already engulfing rival conglomerates and entangling us in an ever wider web of media events, product tie-ins, retail outlets, planned communities and theme parks—has completed its conquest of the world. We can scarcely imagine our exact place in the new order (will we be among the elite enjoying the servility of courtiers in animal costumes or janitors interned in a super-efficient “underpark,” or maybe workers assembling *Pocahontas* pajamas in a sweatshop?), or all of the details of the global Disneyarchy (will Uncle Walt be awakened from his cryogenic slumber to be our leader?). But we do have one reliable oracle of the future: Disney's own propaganda. Thinly veiled in its animated full-length features are Disney's own ambitions, reactionary views of the world and blueprints for social change.

The Lion King, for example, constructs a nightmare from the paranoia of white middle-class suburbanites. A ghetto-full of street-talking, handout-seeking hyenas invade a sunny, well-manicured grassland with the aid of a scheming, effeminate traitor who kills the legitimate ruler and converts his unholy alliance with the hyena underclass into a welfare state. The

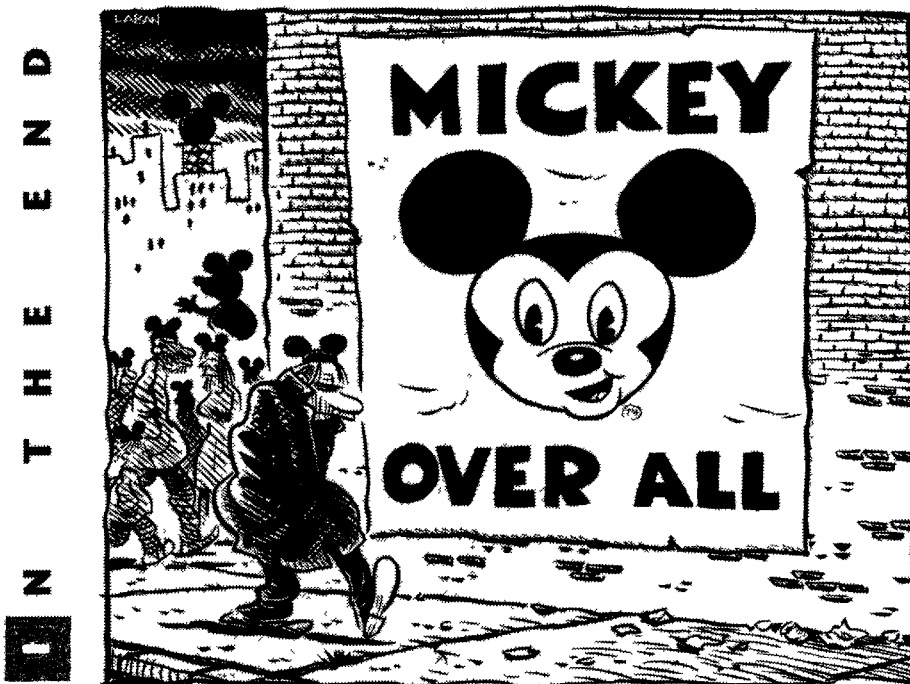
grassland degenerates into a wasteland until the king's rightful heir Simba—who, thinking he caused his father's death, has retreated into the rainforest counterculture—can give up his decadent, alternative lifestyle; overcome his guilt; vanquish the false king, who rules by inciting class conflict rather than by natural right; and abolish the welfare state, restoring free competition among the species. Only then do prosperity and big-ticket consumer goods (such as antelope) return.

In *Pocahontas*, Disney puts on its friendly face, shifting from the grim enforcement of Americanism to the joyous embrace of the Global Village. Ostensibly a plea for tolerance (and an atonement for the Indians of *Peter Pan*), *Pocahontas* is at pains to show that the key to global harmony is communication. In its *West Side Story* take on the conquest of the New World, the clash between Native Americans and Europeans is wholly due to misunderstandings (and to the greed of an effete aristocrat who mistakenly believes that there is gold in Virginia). John Smith and Pocahontas, able to understand each other by “listening with their hearts,” avert the conflict. The story ends with the English leaving and Pocahontas longing for their return, as if to say that if only people had been able to talk to each other, hundreds of

years of bloodshed might have been avoided. By implication, the coming communications revolution will bring nothing but benefits to Third World peoples awaiting “discovery” by multinational corporations. The world will become one happy Aptiva commercial.

Lest we get carried away with visions of the upcoming Global Party, however, we can read the small print in last year's computer-animated Christmas release, *Toy Story*, newly out on video (which allows the kind of continuous, repetitive viewing that helps make the message stick). This manifesto of the Disney Century amounts to a highly condensed version of the last ten years' worth of management literature. It consists of two interwoven parables, exploring the riddles that will encompass our lives: The

Continued on page 39



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